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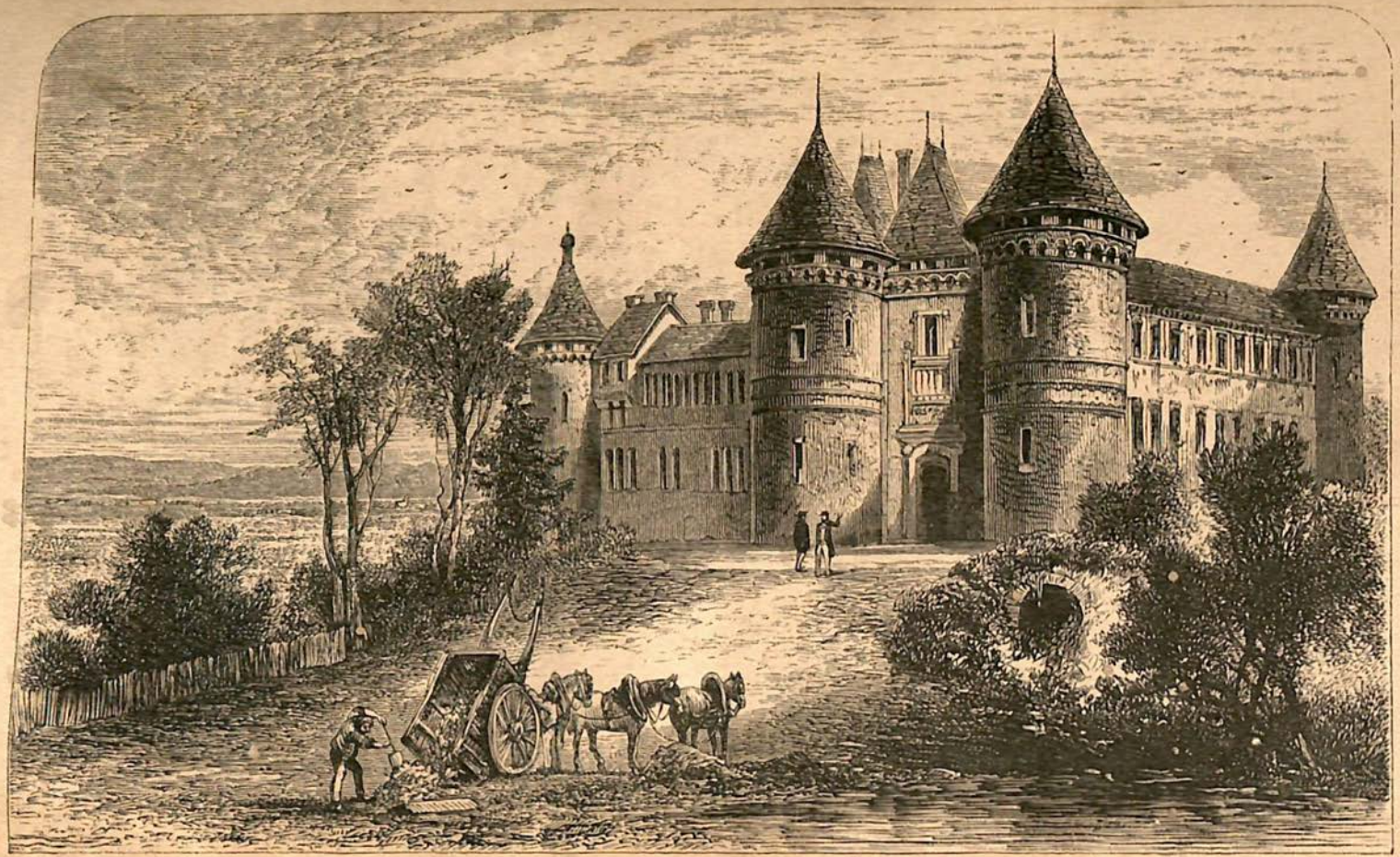

CHAUMONT.

FEUDAL CASTLES OF FRANCE.

(WESTERN PROVINCES.)

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "FLEMISH INTERIORS," ETC., ETC.

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ac.

Illustrated from the Author's Sketches.

"Si vous lisez ceste œuvre toute entière
Arrestez-vous, sans plus à la matière,
En excusant le rhyme et le langage,
Voyant que c'est d'une femme l'ouvrage
Qui n'a en soy science, ne sçavoir,
Fors ung désir que chascun puisse voir,
Que faict le don de Dieu le Créateur
Quand il luy plaict justifier un cœur."

MARGUERITE DE FRANCE.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1869.

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Dedicated

TO THE EVER-PRESENT MEMORY

OF

THE DEAREST AND TRUEST FRIEND I EVER HAD;

WHOSE REFINED THOUGHTS AND INTELLIGENT FOOTSTEPS,

—NEVER PARTED FROM MINE WHILE HE LIVED,—

GUIDED MY WANDERINGS

AMONG THESE "WRECKS OF DAYS DEPARTED."

PREFACE.

In days when ancient and modern tongues have become an absorbing study, there is a language—at once dead and living—which may claim a prominent place among these mysterious channels of communication: by its means alone can intercourse be established between men who, sharing the same tastes, indulging in the same pursuits, actuated by the same impulses, and inhabiting the same world, yet occupy a different period of that world's history—men destined never to meet on this earth,—

> "Who never saw each other's face,
> Nor touched each other's hand,"

and yet, who have so much in common! Most of all, they have in common this palpable, material language, unaltered through all ages, comprehensible to all nations—the universal language of archæology; and an eloquent and mighty language it is, transmitted to us in the very handwriting of Time, and addressing its mute but resistless appeal indiscriminately to all posterity. Unlike other languages, it speaks not to us through the ear, while it directs itself no less to the heart

than the intelligence, exciting our deepest interest, and engaging our warmest sympathies—as it were

. . . . "A chain of linkéd thought."

What can be more stirring than the living record it presents to us of the moral condition of those who preceded us in the untrodden paths of life?—what more touching than the testimony of their efforts to clear the way for our advancement?—what more suggestive than the palpable evidence of the workings of their minds, and the tendencies of their aspirations?

The printed page which registers the thoughts of an admired author, or a departed friend, cannot fail to inspire us with a respectful recognition of his attributes, or a tender recollection of his memory, but it will never bring him before us with the vivid impressiveness with which we recall him, at sight of the identical paper on which he wrote, and the very lines traced by his hand.

Archæology possesses a breadth and a largeness which it would be inconsistent to seek in any other language; for, while every nation has its own expression of it, that of each becomes the common property of all, and none seeks to dispute the right of others to its own.

Again, we may affirm that archæology is the very soul of history; it is the "witness and keeper" of those traditions, which from its testimony alone, derive all their value. The incomparable charm of truth is stamped upon its lore, and we approach it with a trustfulness not to be shaken even by the mystery in which its records are sometimes veiled.

For those who appreciate the pleasure of deciphering it, the history of France—that peculiarly poetical and dramatic history—is written on the stones of her Mediæval Castles, her elaborate Cathedrals, and her venerable Abbeys. It unrolls itself before us as some illuminated parchment, exhibiting on its richly-gilded diapering, in polychromed letters and quaintly-devised capitals, the warlike and valorous exploits, or the fanciful and romantic incidents, with which it is interwoven; and, while we acknowledge the harmony between those chivalrous legends and the uncompromising type in which they are chronicled, we cannot fail to recognise the analogy between these dramas of a bygone age, and the yet surviving scenes where they were enacted.

Despite the ravages of those modern barbarians who, from time to time, have overrun the fertile plains, despoiled the rich valleys, and devastated the leafy forests of France, destroying, together with the labour of the industrious cultivator, the surviving masterpieces of her early artists and architects,—levelling with the ground, edifices which had defied the hand of Time, and braved alike the fury of the elements and the violence of war—we have still remaining, scattered far and wide, invaluable, though, alas! shattered relics of those castellated, ecclesiastical, and abbatial structures, which sprang out of the necessities and the spirit of the times, and respectively exhibit, in their characteristic construction, the period of their birth and the condition of their founders.

Whilst some of these massive, extensive, and wonderfully-devised buildings have been swept away, leaving no more than a few crumbling foundation-stones to mark the spot where they

once proudly stood, others offer themselves to our contemplation in a preservation sufficiently perfect to carry us back into the midst of those valorous times when they formed the strength, the pride, and the defence of their owners, forcibly recalling the courage which inspired them, and the brave exploits in which they played so prominent a part.

As we wander through the now tenantless chambers, silent halls, and grass-grown avenues, where all speaks to us in silent but touching tones of an idiosyncratic past, what more natural than to call up around us the simulacra of warriors and knights, and of the high-born dames and damsels in whose honour they deemed it a privilege to bleed, and die? for we tread in the very footsteps of those who made it the day-dream of their lives to become famous, before they passed away for ever from the stirring scenes in which their lot was cast.

There are few contemporary chroniclers from whose writings we can gather a very accurate idea of the domestic habits and architectural appliances of the earlier periods. Vincentius Fortunatus, in his quaint and curious poetical effusions, now and then makes allusions which justify us in supposing that though the interior arrangements of the dwellings of that epoch were somewhat rough and comfortless, an incipient taste for luxury was beginning, in his day, to dawn; and he mentions instances in which the royal palaces exhibited the then novel refinements of carved and polished surfaces, and a more elaborate finish than had as yet been known. The roof-tree—before that time literally an unshaped, unbarked trunk—now began to be replaced, first by one, then by two, and subsequently by a series of columns of hewn

wood, or even stone, the number being proportioned to the width of the ceiling they were required to support; by-and-by appeared ornamented shafts, while plinths and capitals were added by degrees.

Still the châteaux of those days partook rather of the wealth and plenty, and general aspect of an opulent farm-house, or a country gentleman's seat, than of the luxury and elegance of a court; and no trace was then visible of the subsequent phase of castellated architecture which signalises the Middle Ages, and presents to us the practical view of those military habits and tastes which put every man on the offensive and defensive, and necessarily rendered his house, in very truth, his fortress.

Previously to the spread of these pugnacious notions, the mode of life adopted by suzerains and their retainers was that of a large and united family, bound together by common interests, and mutually contributing to each other's well-being; so that protection and maintenance on the part of the rich compensated for service and labour on that of the poor; and each chieftain possessed within his domain the elements of an independent colony.

According to Thierry, a great many of the dependants of these petty princes were imported from Germany, having either been carried away by force, or enticed by love of change and novelty, to follow the bands of victors, on their return to Gaul, after overthrowing the frontier tribes; and the names of these Germanic ancestors are still to be found scattered over France. The boundary which encircled the vast Merovingian residences embracing within its enclosure, household domestics and retainers, cultivators of various denominations, builders, opera-

tives, mechanics, and artificers, and containing warehouses, granaries, storehouses, manufactories—such as they then were—was often a slight palisade or a narrow trench, serving merely as a line of demarcation, which in simpler times appears to have been respected among neighbouring chiefs; and if archæology has revealed to us the subsisting races of places of this date more strongly protected, such were *not* the habitual dwellings of Merovingian chiefs, but cities of refuge to which they had recourse when attacked, abandoning them again as soon as their foes had retired and the peril had passed away.

The more peaceable edifices, which constituted the dwellings of this remote and antiquated age, bearing a strong analogy to the Roman villa, in no way resemble the fortified citadels of feudal times; of these, such palpable and distinct remains survive, that, aided by the minute and detailed contemporary chronicles, we can readily trace their uses and follow their history. There is, indeed, little difficulty in discerning how much of such edifices belongs to their original plan, and what portions have been transformed, or added, by architects of a more recent day.

The growing power of the wealthier nobles, and the tyranny with which they exercised it, gradually effected a complete transformation upon the entire social system of the country: rivalry, aggression, and war became the order of the day; might was right. *Larron* and *baron* might almost be considered convertible terms, and then grew up those fortress-palaces and baronial strongholds of mediæval memory, within

which those proud and quarrelsome chiefs intrenched themselves, defying all attack, and exacting from their serfs the most uncompromising submission.

It is difficult, in our altered state of society, to realise to ourselves what was the practical condition of daily life under the action and reaction of the feudal system, which gave birth to this characteristic architecture. In its earlier stage, as we have seen, the seignorial castle was the centre and seat of government of an extensive territory, generally seized by aggression and retained by force, but forming a petty sovereignty—the point round which rallied, or from which recoiled —according to the disposition of its lord—those numerous vassals who, recognising their subservience, either paid him a willing, or owed him a grudging, homage. History develops to us how, with the progress of time, the extension of knowledge, the advancement of civilisation, and, above all, the abuse of power, the allegiance of the serfs underwent gradual modifications, until it came to be altogether repudiated; but so long as the privileges of the weaker party were respected by the stronger, and their fidelity and attachment were reciprocated by the protection and countenance of their superiors, the feeling that subsisted on either side was eminently conducive to the security and prosperity of both.

The feudal system was one which obviously could not endure beyond a certain time, or exist simultaneously with an advanced degree of civilisation. Almost any social innovation was calculated first to disturb and then to destroy it. It was not in its nature to survive the increase of population, and the

consequent colonisation of the overplus into towns and cities. Intercommunication with other populations would necessarily militate against its authority, and whenever growing knowledge should enlighten men's minds sufficiently to enable them to compare and to distinguish, from that hour its doom was sealed.

Nevertheless, from the time of Louis le Gros to that of Charles VIII., the principle of fealty to the nobles on the part of the peasantry was recognised and maintained; and as it gradually disappeared under the working of a new policy, it for some time blended with, until it was at length superseded by, a not less remarkable phase—the result of that spirit of chivalry which illustrated the second period of what may be called "la vie châtelaine," and attained the culminating point of its glory in the brilliant days of François I.

The expiring dynasty of the Valois Kings carried away with it the last flickering rays of this social meteor, and with the Bourbon race arose new motives, new influences—a new organisation of things, and except in the rare hold it possessed over individual minds, chivalry became an obsolete, not to say a forgotten institution. It had had its day, it was no longer of the age; the simplicity, the valour, and the disinterestedness which characterised it were not even apprehended by the grosser and more self-seeking natures which now predominated. The "*preux chevalier*," the very essence of whose theory consisted in a generous devotion to the interests of others, had given place to the wily and diplomatic courtier, the secret of whose obsequiousness lay in his hopes of favour and self-aggrandise-

ment, and the whole tone of life, with its motives and impulses, had undergone a change, the effects of which spread rapidly among all classes of society.

During a winter spent in the genial climate of Touraine it had been the day-dream of our thoughts, that as soon as the spring appeared with her more lengthened days, we would take advantage of the opportunity to visit and explore some of these storied relics of bygone ages: the bright and joyous month of April had, accordingly, no sooner appeared than we proceeded to put our project into execution; and perhaps a more gratifying research can hardly be imagined than that afforded by this locality, so singularly fertile in historical remains.

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FEUDAL CASTLES OF FRANCE.

AMBOISE.

The Village of Amboise—Aspect of the Castle; its Origin; early History—Provincial Inn—First Impressions of the Place—Lime Grove—Bijou Chapel of St. Hubert—Our Hostelry—A Provincial *Table d'hôte;* the Guests—Our new Acquaintance—Useful Information—Destruction at Amboise during the Reign of Terror—Church of S. Florentin—Relics, Antiquities, Monuments—Three Maries—Obsequies of Charles VIII.—Hôtel de Ville—Palais Ducal.

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mature Infirmities; his Last Illness; Ambroise Paré; his distempered Condition; his Last Leave of Amboise—Amboise under Henri II.—The youthful Scions of Royalty—Marie Stuart—Marguerite de Valois—Marriage of the Princess Elizabeth—Catherine's Dream; her Alarm and unavailing Precautions—Tragic Fate of the King during the Tournament—Amboise under the youthful François II. and Marie Stuart—Brantôme's Description of Court Festivities—Masks and Mummers—Progress of Literature—Pierre de Ronsard; patronised by the young Sovereigns; his Self-appreciation—Melin de St. Gelais' Opinion of him—The Guises—Conspiracy of Amboise—La Renaudie—Baron de Castelnau—The Prince de Condé; his Character—The Executions; Catherine de Medicis' Conduct on the Occasion; Marie Stuart's Sensibility—The King's last Illness; strange Circumstances connected with it—Suspicions against the Guises; against Catherine—Pierre d'Estoile's Observations—Amboise under Henri III.—The "*Faction des Seize*"—Amboise under Louis XV.—"Le Roi Choiseul"—Amboise under the National Assembly; repaired under Louis Philippe—Amboise the Prison of Abd-el-Kader; his Popularity among the neighbouring Noblesse; his Release; the Condition in which he left Amboise.

FEUDAL CASTLES OF FRANCE.

AMBOISE.

INTRODUCTION.

"Beneath those battlements, within those walls,
Power dwelt amidst her passions; in proud state
Each robber chief upheld his armèd halls,
Doing his evil will, nor less elate
Than mightier heroes of a longer date.
What want these outlaws conquerors should have,
But history's purchased page to call them great?
A wider space, an ornamented grave?
Their hopes were not less warm, their souls perchance as brave."

Childe Harold.

Our first halting-place was the ancient and romantic little *Bourg* of Amboise, east of Tours and on the left bank of the Loire, at the spot where the Amasse in passing it forms an islet. The bridges that cross the two streams meet on this spot.

Above the steep-roofed dwellings, towers on its rocky eminence the venerable mediæval castle, so prominent in the annals of the Valois kings, but dating its original existence from a much earlier period. The site is in itself suggestive of a fortress; and so thought Julius Cæsar, who, on his invasion of Gaul, having vanquished the Gallic confederation, esta-

blished first a camp and then a fort here, availing himself of some curious natural excavations he found and enlarged by making some of them into storehouses of three stories, for the purpose of concealing his arms and ammunition, and possibly his men. Some of these caverns doubtless served as granaries, though it is of course very uncertain whether they were put to any of these uses until a much later period. Still they are called "Cæsar's Granaries."

Of the nature of the original elevation we have no means of judging, for not a vestige of its form remains, though some portions of those old Roman foundations, indestructible everywhere, still mark parts of the ground plan. Of the antiquity of Amboise we have, however, sufficient proofs in the writings of early chroniclers; thus, in the third Dial. of Sulpicius Severus, we find the following allusion: "In vico Ambasiensi, id est castello illo veteri, quod nunc frequens habitatur a fratribus," &c. . . . . "Hæc ipsa creditur esse insula (ad confluentes Ligoris et Amatissæ situm) quæ hodiè propè Ambaciam visitur arboribus confisa, vulgò insula S^{cti} Johannis dicta." St. Gregory of Tours (in his "Hist. Franc.," lib. ii. 181A) describes a conciliatory meeting which took place at Amboise, An. Chr. 507, between Alaric, King of the Goths, and Clovis. It appears that having agreed upon their terms they dined here, just as two nineteenth-century English diplomatists would have done, to ratify the proposed peace. "Oppidum istud," he concludes, "etiam nunc celebre est, vulgò 'Amboise' dicitur."

Twice was this fortress sacked and destroyed by the Normans, but again rebuilt by the earlier Counts of Anjou, three of whom, Hugues, Sulpice, and Ingelger, are recorded as having entrenched themselves within its walls. The Castle of Amboise received considerable additions and embellishments

under the descendants of these nobles. From the marriage of Sulpice III. with Mathurine de Blois, dame d'Amboise, came the stock of Chaumont d'Amboise, from Jean de Borrie, their son. In 1341 Louis d'Amboise, having been attainted of high treason under Philippe VI., his lands were confiscated, and came into possession of the crown. Philippe soon made this stronghold a royal residence, and as such it was more or less employed by all the Valois kings, undergoing improvements and modifications from time to time, but chiefly under Louis XI. and Charles VIII., by whom it was almost rebuilt. After his reign, without discontinuing to be a palace, it became also a state prison, until 1762, when the Duc de Choiseul Stainville, prime minister under Louis XV., received it from that monarch, and elevated it into a *duché-pairie* in 1764. In 1793 it was taken by the National Assembly, and at the restoration fell to the Duke of Orleans, as heir to the Duc de Penthiévre. During the later years of Louis Philippe's reign, Amboise was the prison in which was confined the noble Arab chief, Abd-el-Kader, who was only released on the accession of the present Emperor.

We arrived at Amboise on a sunny afternoon in August. The vine-clad undulations of the "Garden of France" were in all the perfection of their luxuriance, and the face of nature smiled with the consciousness of fulfilled promise. Pasture and cornfield alike proclaimed the results of successful industry, and not a patch that met the eye but bespoke the care and cultivation of the inhabitants.

Amboise is a tranquil and antiquated little town, and there is no great choice or luxury of accommodation. We put up, therefore, at the quaint little hostelry of the "Lion d'Or," thankful that, with the primitiveness of a Spanish *fonda*, the brick floors were at all events clean, and there was not a cobweb

on the whitewashed walls, covered half way up by a well waxed, worm-eaten panelling. We ordered a meal to be prepared in the *salle à manger*, and were fain to leave it to the discretion of mine host, who, with his white cap and white apron, accompanied by the long sheathed knife at his waist, was evidently his own *chef*, to provide us what best he might. It was Thursday, and the dinner hour was passed; vain, therefore, was it to expect he would be able to find any *chère grasse*, so we trusted our appetites in his knowing hands, and strolled out to obtain a more detailed knowledge of the beautiful old château which reared itself just opposite, only high, high above our windows.

It made a beautiful picture in the glow of that bright summer afternoon. The ancient, moss-grown, embattled walls nestling in the ivy which clings about them, and supported by massive buttresses; the cylindrical old towers and rounded roofs rising in sharp conical points above the long line of tall windows, formed a *tout ensemble* of unique and picturesque character. A group of saddled asses, tethered just beneath the rocky steep out of which the building seems to rise—stone of its stone, and strong of its strength—was suggestive of the toilsomeness of the road, but we could not satisfy ourselves there would be any justification for putting ourselves into the uncomfortable and undignified position they seemed to require, so we wandered on without their aid. We soon tracked the winding road which, after no very long or very fatiguing ascent, brought us to the plateau. Here were gardens tastefully laid out in a fashion quite in accordance with the antiquated and castellated style of the building, and kept with all the neatness of an English pleasure-ground. The walks, well gravelled and broad, were cut between soft, closely-mown lawns; richly-tinted exotics adorned the flower borders,

while myrtles and orange trees, in square green boxes, gave to the spot the stamp of a royal demesne.

It would have been too late to seek admission to the interior that evening, so we contented ourselves with enjoying the balmy atmosphere, with watching the glorious sunset from that venerable elevation, and looking down on the little tranquil town below us, nestling in the peaceful valleys of the Loire and the Amasse, as they flowed on for ever between banks teeming with corn and wine, and smiling pasture: amidst it was the bridge—that old bridge, trodden erewhile by Gregory of Tours, and standing yet as firm as it was in *his* day, when its age may have already been considerable, for even he does not speak of it as a new structure.

As we pursued these esplanades we arrived, on the right of the edifice, at an umbrageous grove of lime trees of singular design. It was laid out in alleys, or we might almost say a nave and aisles; the trunks of the trees, planted at regular intervals, forming the columns, and the upper branches, cut and trained according to the lines of groined arches, intersecting each other, and filled up between, with the thick foliage as a roof. This architectural plantation we learned was a royal caprice of very early date, and the original form has been carefully maintained. On the other side of the castle, and at a little distance from it, embosomed in trees, stands the miniature chapel—an architectural gem—erected by Charles VIII. and dedicated to St. Hubert, to whom he had a particular devotion.* No doubt in this beautiful

* The legendary history of St. Hubert is pretty well known. He was great at the Court of Pepin le Bref, and was the son of Bertrand, Duc d'Aquitaine. Being a monomaniac on the subject of hunting in his hot youth, he neglected all other occupation, and even slighted his devotions for the sake of indulging his dominant passion. Having one day lost his way in a forest, he saw before him a vision of a stag bearing between his horns a crucifix, and while he gazed in mute astonishment on the singular sight, a voice addressed him, warning him to desist

little chapel the pious king heard many a "hunting mass," but it was principally for his beloved queen, Anne of Brittany, that Charles VIII. erected this oratory, a monument at once of his taste and his affection. The exquisite delicacy with which every portion of its florid ornamentation is executed, strikes the visitor with wonder and admiration. It stands in the gardens, at a short distance from the castle, embowered in trees on one side, but rising perpendicularly, as if out of the very rock, on the other. The ground plan is a Greek cross, and the carving, whether within or without, is so minute and elaborate that it has the appearance rather of ivory than of stone. The material, however, comes from a quarry in the neighbourhood, and is well adapted for the purpose. The texture is fine, and when first quarried it is soft and easily cut, whereas it gradually hardens with age. The rich designs introduced, consist of foliage, cut out *à jour* with consummate skill, with which are intermingled the grotesque figures of the period; while the groining and bosses of the roof, the frieze—which follows the outline of the building—and all the accessories, are finished with a magnificent disregard of expense. This chapel was worthily restored under Louis Philippe.

The shades of evening were now closing round us, so we turned our steps homeward and found a table neatly laid, together with the welcome news that our repast awaited us. Our *cordon bleu* had not been idle in our absence, and he soon laid upon the fair white cloth a *blanquette* of something almost as white as itself; we were decidedly hungry, and, having ventured to taste of the dish, found it so well flavoured that we

from his evil ways on pain of eternal punishment. Hubert was so deeply impressed by the occurrence that he retired into a monastery, and, vowing himself to the priesthood, persuaded his wife to take the veil. He was promoted to the bishopric of Maestricht and Liege, and earned a great reputation for religious fervour. He was entitled the Apostle of the Ardennes.

resolved to "ask no questions," and to be thankful we were not worse off. It was only the next day we elicited that the delicacy we had so highly approved was a dish of *frogs!* The remove which followed there was *no* mistaking; *escargots* they were—unmitigated snails! exquisitely hashed with parsley, and bread crumbs, and seasoning, and served up without disguise in their shells. These—having taken the edge off our appetite—we ventured to decline, regretting our host's disappointment; but as some capital *friture* of river fish had been prepared, and several sorts of vegetables, all disguised in mysterious sauces, we could well dispense with *MM. les colimaçons*, and restored Boniface's good humour by expressing our entire approval of his efforts. *Vin du pays* was, of course, abundant: but, if the inn was as unsophisticated as a Spanish *parador*, the cooking and the cleanliness were "things of France;" but, we must add, so was the bread,—shaped like a walking-stick, or rather walking-club, the rough exterior, the honey-combed texture of the scanty crumb, and its acid nature, were a complete contrast to the exceptionally excellent and snow-white compound they call bread in the Peninsula, and which remains unapproached by other bakers of whatever nationality. Our beds were such as one finds in France alone, in a small provincial hotel, and soundly we slept in their snug depths, till the bright morning sunbeams stole into our homely little alcove, and reminded us of the day's work before us. Mine host, who was attention itself, soon knocked gently at the door, and, informing us breakfast was at eleven, set down on the *guéridon*, which inevitably occupies the centre of a French bedroom, a small tray on which was a cup of tempting-looking coffee and a delicate *tartine*—the stop-gap with which a Frenchman amuses his appetite *en attendant* his *déjeûner à la fourchette*, which we call "lunch."

This was not the most convenient routine for those with whom economy of time was important. The landlord of the "Lion d'Or" was rooted to his ways—a conservative all over—and the arrangements of the hotel were arbitrary, so, not wishing to disarrange his plans, we acquiesced, utilising the interval in making a sketch of the grand old fortress. At the appointed time we returned to our inn, where, with a punctuality worthy of all praise, the mid-day meal was spread, and the guests, evidently *habitués*, had already taken their places. It was a *table d'hôte*, one of the old-fashioned sort—rarely enough met with now-a-days—which means what it says, and at which host and hostess preside. They sat next each other at the middle of one side, for it was an oblong board, and we soon perceived that the "composition" of the table consisted, besides sojourners in the hotel, of respectable burgesses belonging to the little town—for Amboise may be called a town, it numbers something under 5,000 inhabitants. We sat down, therefore, a party of some fifteen, with appetites sharpened by the lateness of the hour, prepared to do justice to the meal, which was well dressed and well served. Finding that we were seated next to an intelligent fellow, a small landowner—*propriétaire*, if you please—in the immediate neighbourhood, we attacked him on the subject which had brought us hither, but, to our disappointment, we found that matters here corresponded with the Scripture proverb, to wit, that a "prophet has no honour in his own country," and that our neighbour took very little account of this fine historical lion. He had recently made a railway excursion to Blois, and accordingly Blois was everything. Few of the others had been so far, or even if they had, it had been on business, and they had not much cared to explore a château that could be seen at any time. We determined, however, to show him our

appreciation of his apathy by informing him how many miles we had travelled for the sake of visiting what he held so cheap, and roused him into something like an interest about the historical remains in our own country. His taste evidently lay in the way of ruins. Perhaps his ancestors were among those who helped to make them, laying waste with ruthless hand the treasured relics of an earlier period, and cutting off succeeding generations from so many clues to the manners and customs and degree of civilisation attained by their forefathers, when in their democratic fury, they devastated the domestic and ecclesiastical architecture of fair France.

The *table d'hôte* breakfast was not a very prolonged meal, and as we were quitting the table our right-hand neighbour, who had been engaged in a hot political discussion with his right-hand man, and with whom we had had no conversation, addressed us politely, and asked us whether we had no desire to see the little town of Amboise as well as the castle, for, he assured us, in the chapel of St. Florentin we should find a monument of mediæval times which had attracted the admiration of antiquaries, and which he advised us to examine. We accordingly accepted his obliging offer, and gladly accompanied him to the spot.

As we walked along he entertained us with observations on the locality. "Would you believe it," replied he, "those *gueux de révolutionaires* who devastated this place like every other, and destroyed every sacred emblem they could lay their hands on, when they came to the château of the Comtesse d'Amboise,—one of the most distinguished of our ancient noblesse,—and saw over her door a statue of St. Michael, they determined to demolish it, exclaiming with oaths, 'Allons, camarades, delogeons vite ce coquin là;' but, as it was fastened with an iron stay, the heavy stones they threw, only mutilated it. At length one nimble

fellow climbed up and managed to get a rope round its neck, by means of which they proceeded to haul it down. After tugging violently for some time at the grim stone figure, loading it with imprecations, it at length took them at their word, like the commandant in the Festin de Pierre; but, in complying with their rash behest, St. Michael severely visited their fool-hardiness upon them. His effigy thus rudely handled, fell headlong down, crushing two of them in its fall. Over the west door of the parish church of St. Denis," he continued, "is a representation of *Dieu le Père*, carved in stone and projecting from the waist in relief after the mediæval fashion: of this they contented themselves with disfiguring the features, after which one of them, hoisting a red cap of liberty on the end of a stick, adjusted it on the head, to the infinite merriment of his companions."

We had now reached St. Florentin, and on entering, our self-constituted guide, we observed, devoutly crossed himself with holy water and knelt for a few minutes. The object to which he had directed our attention, we found, was a "*Saint Sepulchre*" removed from the chapel of St. Ambroise, for which it was originally constructed. It consisted of six life-size figures, dated about 1530, representing the three Maries, St. Joseph of Arimathea, St. John, and our Lord, whose body they are engaged in entombing. The material in which these figures are modelled is baked clay, painted, and the design is good. They are well grouped, and some pains have been bestowed on the faces.

Our informant told us that the three female figures were taken from life, and were likenesses of the three daughters of Babou, intendant of the palace under Francis I., whose mistresses they successively became. Royal favour seems to have run in the family, for it has been said that the grand-

daughters of two of these "*Maries*" were, in their turn, mistresses of Henry IV., and are known to history as Marie de Beauvilliers and Gabrielle d'Estrées.

"Within these walls, too," said our friend, "were performed the obsequies of Charles VIII., who was much beloved by his country, and principally by the inhabitants of Amboise; for it was his native place, and he loved it, and lived much in the château. Around it he had his hunting-parties, and there were always games and feats of strength, of which he was fond, within the grounds. He died in the tennis-court, and his body was brought to St. Florentin with great pomp. The Cardinal Jean Perault, Bishop of Saintes, officiated, and the sacristan—for it is his business to know these things—will tell you how many torches and tapers blazed during the solemn rites. We haven't had a royal funeral now for some time; that of Louis XVIII., strange as it may seem, was the last," he added, as if a sudden wish to see a reproduction of the ceremonies had inspired him. "Money was distributed to the poor," he continued, "as was the custom in those days on such occasions; and no doubt a good deal of it was spent in masses, for the people of Amboise regretted their favourite young king and deplored his unfulfilled destiny."

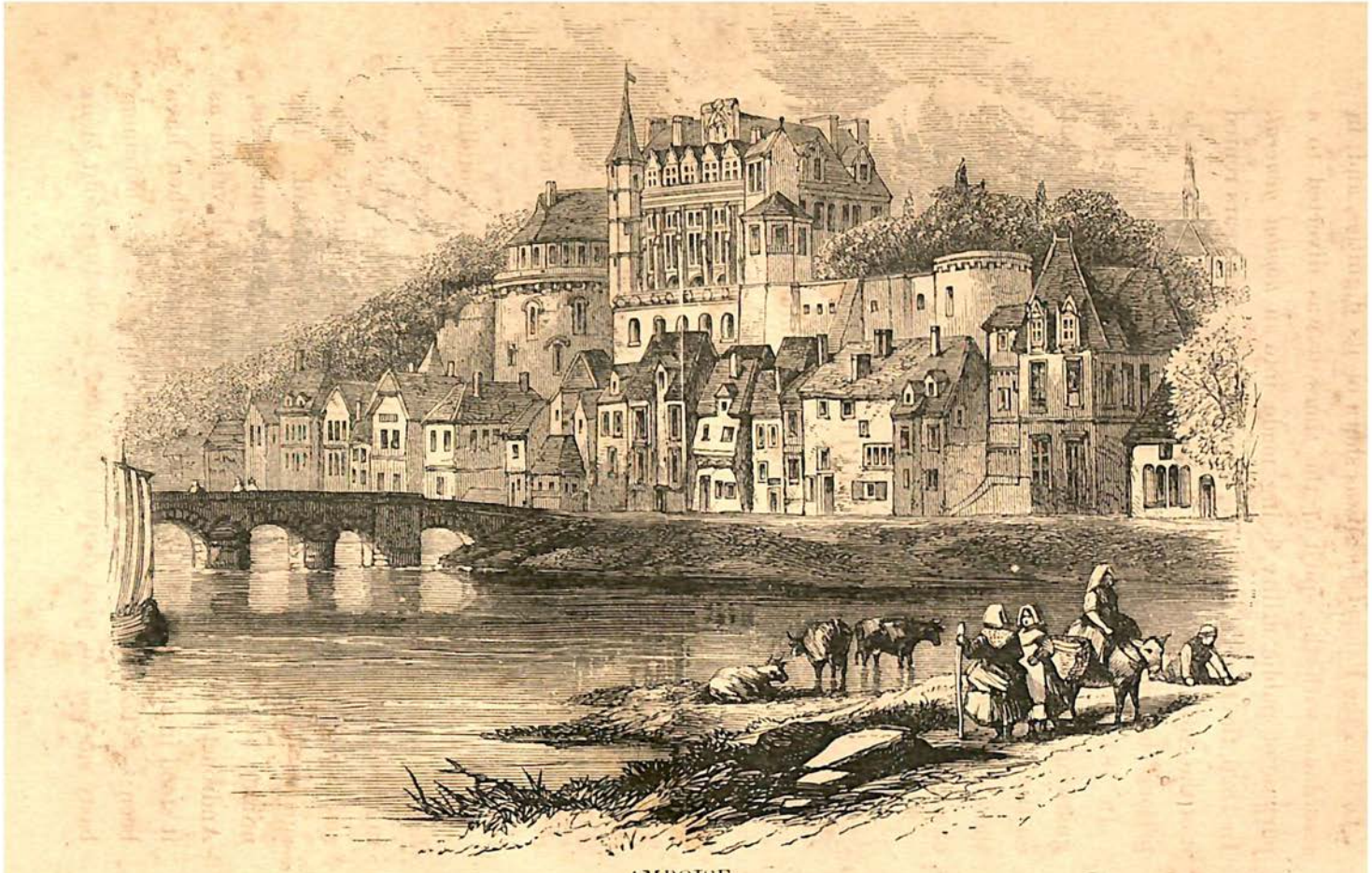
"But you must not suppose, Monsieur," interposed the sacristan, "that Charles VIII. lies *buried* here; it was only the funeral mass which was celebrated at St. Florentin. The king's heart was deposited in an urn and reposes beside that of his father, Louis XI., at Notre Dame de Cléry—much nearer together than ever they were in their lifetime, I suspect."

"His body, with a figure surmounting it, intended to represent him, was carried," says Monstrelet, "with great solemnity to Paris, halting at the church of Notre Dame des Champs, in the suburbs; here it was watched all night by some of his most

confidential friends; the next morning it was met there by a grand procession from Paris, consisting of all the clergy, with processional crosses borne before them, the four orders of Mendicant Friars, the members of the Court of Parliament and of the Courts of Justice, provost sheriffs and inhabitants clothed in mourning. At Notre Dame des Champs they were met by the lords, officers, pages of honour, and other attendants on the corpse, to the number of 7,000 persons, all hooded and attired in black. It was thus conducted to Notre Dame de Paris. There were carried beside it 400 torches, ornamented with escutcheons of three *fleurs de lis*, borne by as many poor men dressed in black cloaks and hoods. A funeral mass was said at Notre Dame, and then, with the same ceremonies, the dead King was conveyed through Paris to the Abbaye de St. Denis, where another mass was said, and *largesse* was again made to the people. Here the body was deposited in the tomb which had been prepared, and when all was ended, the assistants were refreshed with a liberal repast."

We next visited, with our new acquaintance, the Hôtel de Ville, a fine old building of the early sixteenth century, erected by Pierre Morin, then Treasurer of France and Mayor of Amboise—who, however, died soon after it was begun; his widow, Françoise, consequently completed it in 1505. It subsequently became the property of François Tissard, who was born at Amboise in 1460, and is known to fame as the celebrated Hellenist of his time.

The Duc de Choiseul, who became proprietor of the château in 1764, purchased the whole domain of the "successeurs judiciaires" of M. Chastaignier, and of the Hôtel de Ville he made "le siège de la justice seigneuriale, la prison et la chambre des comptes;" hence its name of Palais Ducal, for, as we have said above, Amboise was erected into a *duché-pairie* for this minister.



AMBOISE.

In 1793 the Palais Ducal was shorn of its dignities, and, in accordance with the spirit of the times, it was diverted to a purpose of public utility, being made into an *hôpital général.* In 1826, the town of Amboise, which had for some years rented it of the Administration des Hospices, "pour la justice et la prison," bought it back for 8,500 francs.

In 1848 to 1852 it was occupied by a garrison employed in guarding the castle whilst Abd-el-Kader was in durance; but, on the liberation of the Arab prisoner by the present Emperor, the old edifice of Pierre Morin, which had undergone so many changes, returned to its original use.

THE CHATEAU.

This little digression had been so full of interest that we had reason to rejoice in the fortunate chance which had delayed to such good purpose the intended object of our visit to the place, and it was with many thanks to our amiable guide that we recognised his good service, and took our leave of him.

We now made our way to the foot of the rock, on which, perched like an eagle's nest on its majestic elevation, towers the noble castellated palace.

Although the larger portion of this once extensive building has succumbed to the ravages of time and war, the *façade* looking towards the river has withstood these destroying influences, and offers an imposing and attractive picture, scarcely to be surpassed in beauty of outline and richness of detail. The minute and elaborate description of a contemporary architect, Androuet de Cerceau, accompanying the plan and elevation as it stood in 1500, gives a grand idea of what it must then have been:—"Tout le circuit du bastiment," he says, "est fièrement basty sur roc au pied duquel ioignant la closture, sont deux

grosses tours, de dix à onze toises de diamètre endedans, ou environ, de sorte que tous les chariots avec chevaux peuvent monter du bas en hault iusques à la Court du Chasteau."

Having reached the wide arched entrance to the massive round dungeon-tower, we were admitted by an old man, who did the honours of the place. Our way up, we found, was by means of this broad ascending spiral road, or cordon, after the manner of the stairless-staircase of Bossuet's Palace, at Meaux, or the similar ascent of the Castle of St. Angelo; the roof surmounting it is groined, and its arches are supported on corbels formed of truncated human heads grouped together. Of the occasion of the construction of this architectural contrivance we shall have to speak *en tems et lieu*.

One of the curiosities of the castle in former days, but which the servitor told us had now long ceased to exist, was an enormous pair of staghorns, between which appeared a head and neck of equally colossal proportions. Their magnitude took every one by surprise, but the whole model was so skilfully executed that no one ever thought of doubting its genuineness, until, in 1700, Philip V., King of Spain, visiting the castle, took it into his head to examine the prodigy more closely than others; but even then it was only by dint of the minutest scrutiny that he could feel sure that he had detected the fact, viz., that it was artificial.

Within the castle, all has been altered and modernised, and the dilapidated old furniture and faded draperies, brought hither from other palaces, and thrust without regard to taste or appropriateness into the various chambers, destroys the dignity of a place where all the associations are interesting and venerable.

The intendant, however, still professed to designate special spots as the localities of historical incidents, and showed the hall

in which Louis XI. met his brother, the King of Sicily, and his Queen, who came to ratify, by a personal interview, their reconciliation, mainly effected by the peace-making efforts of Louis's Queen, "who," says Monstrelet, "like a good and noble lady as she was, exerted herself most therein." Wherever Louis XI. has left his name, there also has he left remembrances of his hard and cruel disposition, and the *oubliettes* of Amboise are said still to contain the dust and the dark history of many of his victims. At Amboise it was that, on 1st August, 1469, Louis XI. instituted an order of knighthood, which he placed under the patronage and invocation of St. Michael, whom he held in special reverence, and regarded as peculiarly deserving of the honour of becoming the patron of a chivalrous order, seeing that, as he says in the act of institution, "this saint was the first knight who took up God's quarrels and fought victoriously against the dragon, the original enemy of human nature, hurling him from heaven; and that he has, besides, always known how to defend all spots dedicated to his care, and placed under his protection; witness the Mont St. Michel. These words, constituting the motto of the order, *Immensi tremor Oceani*, illustrate an early popular tradition, according to which, on every occasion on which the English have attempted to attack this fortress, the archangel has visibly interfered by bringing down clouds and storms, and letting loose the fury of the elements."

The Order of St. Michel was at first distributed to a chosen few, and remained very select; but later, under Catherine de Medicis, it was bestowed so indiscriminately that it lost its value with its exclusiveness, and under Henry II. it had come to be designated as "*Le collier à toutes bêtes.*"

The first personage who was honoured by the offer of this

order was the Duke of Brittany; but, flattering as the distinction then was, the duke refused to accept it, alleging that he had just been dignified with that of the Golden Fleece, thus becoming brother and ally to the Duke of Burgundy; "which," says Monstrelet, "offended the king, and not without reason." This incident, as might be expected, led to a prolonged and sanguinary rupture between them.

During the subsequent year, Louis XI., who was sojourning here with his queen, received the visit of Margaret of Anjou, queen of Henry VI., with her son Edward, Prince of Wales; and here did the wily Louis, by his persuasions, restore amity between the queen and the enemy and dethroner of her husband, Warwick, for the furtherance of his own interests.

In the month of June of this same year, 1470, the Queen of France presented her husband with "a fayre son," who was born in the Castle of Amboise, and was presently baptized by the name of Charles, by the Archbishop of Lyons, who was his godfather, with the Prince of Wales, destined to be killed at the battle of Tewkesbury. His godmother was his sister, Princess Jeanne of France, the first and divorced wife of the Duke of Orleans, afterwards Louis XII. Te Deums were sung in all the churches, and bonfires and public tables were spread in the streets, that the poor might take part in the rejoicings at the birth of the Dauphin Charles, who was one day to become the idol of his people, from whom he won the spontaneous appellation of "Charles l'Affable et le Courtois." Poor young prince! his gentle yet brave and generous nature was a refreshing contrast to that of his selfish, despotic, cruel, and crafty father, but his physical constitution was weak, and his life too brief for the glorious projects he had planned.

At Amboise the years of his neglected childhood rolled away; he wandered alone and uncared for among the forests which

embowered his palace-prison, till the productions of nature, the silent witnesses of his lonesome hours, became his loved and familiar friends. The birds, the trees, the rocks, the stream, the old grey moss-grown walls, had been the trusty confidants of his childish sorrows, and to these he never ceased through life to turn when his more active existence gave him leisure for tranquillity and repose. Till within a short time of his father's death, Charles was condemned to live in inactivity and seclusion at Amboise, where he was strictly debarred from the acquisition of the simplest rudiments of knowledge. His education may literally be said to have been coeval with his emancipation, which only began when his unnatural father ceased to live. What this young prince might have been had his natural ability been developed by judicious cultivation we may judge from the circumstance that, even as it was, Jacques de Bourgogne asserts "la renommée de ses valeurs faisait trembler, non seulement l'Europe, mais l'Asie."

To return: Monstrelet tells us that, in the month of January following the birth of the Dauphin, the king and queen left Amboise for Paris, making a very long journey. Louis, with whom superstition had entirely superseded religion, would not think of passing Cléry without stopping there to pay his devotions to Notre Dame de Cléry, in the chapel erected by himself under pressure of some senseless vow extorted by the credulous alarm of his guilty conscience. In this chapel, dedicated to his special patroness, he was wont to pass hours on hours, stealing away from his court to hold secret conferences with this representative of divine power, and whenever he found himself in an awkward scrape, or was closely pressed by any difficulty, out of which he did not see his way in the ordinary course of things, he would propitiate her favour by

threats and promises; but the wary old suppliant took good care not to commit himself, and always reserved a loophole in case he obtained what he wanted. "Exaucez-moi donc, ma bonne petite dame," was his customary conclusion, "et *je scay* ce que je vous donnerai."

"His second rest was at Orleans, and thence he went into Beauce. He lay the following night at Puiset, a village near Orleans, and on the morrow at Palaiseau, near Montl'hery. The next day he dined at Sceaux, at the house of Maistre Jean Baillet, master in ordinary of requests of the king's household, and that evening came to his hotel of the Tournelles, at Paris," —now converted into the Place Royale, which has long ceased to be a palace.

In the year 1483, took place at Amboise the betrothal of Marguerite de Flandres, daughter of Mary of Burgundy, aged three and a half, with Charles the Dauphin (afterwards Charles VIII.), aged twelve. P. de Commines quotes from a letter written by the députés d'Amiens, who were present, some curious details of the ceremony :—

"On Sunday, 22nd June, 148-," says this document, "took place the arrival of Mademoiselle la Delphine, Monsieur d'Albrect, and other lords and ladies who had attended her to Amiens; Monsieur le Delphin went out to meet her at a farm near the town of Amboise, called 'Métairie de la Reyne.' The little princess left the said château wearing a robe of crimson satin, lined with black velvet, mounted on a hacquenée, preceded by twenty archers, and followed by ten others, with M. de Dunois, M. de la Trémouille, M. le Grand Sénéchal de Normandie, le Bailly de Meaux, and other Seigneurs, and after he had saluted the ladies, he returned to a lodge near the bridge, where he alighted and changed his dress, putting on a long robe of cloth of gold."

There was, it appears, a numerous guard to keep the people from crowding on the small royal personages and their attendants, and "on the arrival of Madame la Delphine she was taken down from her litter, and the betrothal was solemnized." It does not appear that the ceremony was in a church, or that any ecclesiastic took part in it, the official who performed it being the "protonotaire, nephew of the said Grand Seneschal, who asked Mon dit Seigneur le Delphin in a loud voice, so that all might hear it, would he take Madame Marguerite d'Autriche in marriage, who answered, he would; and in like manner he inquired of Mademoiselle la Delphine, who answered similarly; and this being done, he joined their hands, and Monsieur le Delphin was twice kissed by Mademoiselle la Delphine, and afterwards both returned to the castle: and the streets of Amboise were hung with cords, covered with crimson cloth, as for a procession of the Blessed Sacrament."

This marriage, which was so displeasing to King Edward IV. of England, that it is said to have hastened his death, was dissolved in the year 1491, when Charles VIII., now King of France, sent Margaret back to Flanders, in order to espouse Anne, daughter of François, Duc de Bretagne, already betrothed to Maximilian of Austria; but preferring Charles VIII., their marriage was likewise annulled in order to carry out the wishes of the King of France. Time fled: Louis XI. passed away, leaving a clouded spot upon the page of history; Charles VIII. became king, then he became a man, and then a hero. What more he might have been we know not, for in 1497 France, which had begun to love him, to believe in him, and to trust him, was all at once to lose her pride and her glory, and the old walls of Amboise, within whose shelter

he had drawn his first breath, were now to echo his latest sigh, and as they had once cradled his infant limbs, now entombed his disfigured corpse. Charles died in the midst of great projects, of which he had already accomplished a part, at the early age of twenty-eight.

The span of human life, nevertheless—in which great things destined to live in after ages had been achieved, and still greater, never to be fulfilled, had been premeditated—formed but a brief and insignificant episode in the history of the hoary old château, reared by the hands of kings—but *mortal* kings—and standing calmly by, to see them come, play their brief part, and then be gone for ever!

The mode and cause of Charles's untimely death have been variously narrated by various historians, but all agree that he was in the very zenith of his self-attained mental vigour, and, spurred to new efforts by past success, was on the point of carrying out his admirably organised plans for a second invasion of Italy.

In Monstrelet's memoirs of this reign, we read that "as Charles was one day passing through a gallery of the court of Amboise, with his Queen, Anne of Brittany, amusing himself with looking at the feats of some tennis players, he was suddenly seized with a fit—for his health, which had always been feeble, had become daily worse—and died shortly after, in his twenty-eighth year, A.D. 1497:" while local tradition, investing the incident with something of the marvellous, asserts that one day, while amusing himself in the tennis-court—a favourite place of resort with him—the king struck his head against a doorway which was built too low, that he paid no attention to the accident, and that a week or two later, having called the queen to accompany him thither, that he might show

her the diversion going on, he suddenly, and without any apparent reason, swooned on the same spot. As if in corroboration of this version, the unlucky doorway is still shown. It is a suggestive incident of the manners of the time, that the king remained lying where he fell, in a semi-conscious state, for some hours, for he never uttered a coherent phrase after. Moreover, we are told by the old chroniclers that the people about the court, and general attendants passed in and out—for this gallery was a mere passage—whilst their Sovereign lay dying. All seem to have lost their presence of mind by the suddenness of the event, and there was no one to give orders or to prescribe the decorum required on so unlooked-for and solemn an occasion. This king was, nevertheless, singularly beloved, not only by his queen, but by all who surrounded him, and it is said that two of his officers, to whom he had shown great kindness, died of grief at his obsequies. Gratitude was, at least in this case, not what Johnson describes it—"a sense of favours to come." Philippe de Commines, in his quaint phraseology, lauds the excellent heart of Charles VIII., whose face and figure appear to have been greatly wanting in dignity. This defect, more to be regretted in the person of a king than of a subject, was, however, considerably compensated by a singular grace of manner and sweetness of expression. Guicciardini gives us what we might expect an Italian's description of the prince would be; but there is so much vindictiveness apparent in his words, that we at once feel suspicious of his veracity. According to Brantôme, we may ourselves judge of Charles VIII.'s exterior. He tells us, on the authority of "feu ma grand'-mère," Madame la Sénéchale de Poictou, de la maison de Lude, foster sister of Madame de Bourbon the regent, and sister of the king, that he was the very counterpart of his

"effigie douce et bénigne qui est à St. Denis en bronze doré," and she always styled it "La Véronique du Roi."*

His education had been designedly neglected by the jealous and miserably-mistaken policy of his crafty and despotic father, but he was no sooner emancipated from this tyranny than he began with assiduity to search out all the sources of information he could command, and, late as it was, by the energy of his character he soon raised himself from the depths of ignorance into which he had sunk. At the same time his consideration and generosity, and the justice of his disposition, commanded the respect and won the affection of all who approached him. "Il estoit si bon," writes the annalist we have before quoted, "qu'il n'estoit possible de voyre meilleure créature;" and he deplores the humiliating circumstance of his death in language expressive equally of regret for his fate and mortification at the unkingly manner in which it came. "Hélas!" he writes, "il ne mourut point en un lieu où son généreux cœur le portoit, mais au chasteau d'Amboise, et au plus vil lieu qu'y fut, dans une gallerie voyant jouer à la paume." "Si que l'on peut dire de luy," adds Brantôme, "comme dict Paulo Jovio du roy François 1er, qui mourust à Rambouillet—'Et sic maximus orbis rex, in infimo totius Galliæ vico periit' (ce qui n'est, car la maison, le chasteau et le bourg sont très beaux, grands, illustres et fort renommez en France); mais il sera mieux dict de nostre roy Charles—'Et sic maximus rex totius orbis, in vilissimo, totius suæ *aulæ*, loco periit;' et, s'il vous plaist, en voyant jouer de la paume: spectacle certes bien différent à celui qu'il s'estait proposé,

* When Charles's remains, with those of all the kings of France, were exhumed and dishonoured by the order of the Convention, on the 12th October 1793, nothing was found in his coffin but a few dry bones.

mourir en voyant ses belles entreprises et conquestes faire et achever devant luy."

Commines gives a very minute account of the king's last hours, and says that at the very moment which preceded his death, he was engaged in deep conversation with his confessor, Jacques de Resli, Bishop of Angers. He was lamenting all that had been blamable in his past life, and planning all possible amendment for the future, when he suddenly fell back in an apoplectic fit. The bishop, alarmed, called for assistance, and the courtiers and attendants, terrified at the suddenness of the seizure, brought a pallet and laid him on it where he was. On the same night, April 7, he expired at eleven o'clock. He adds that the king recovered his voice three times for a short interval, for he was told so by the confessor, and that at each time he exclaimed, "Mon Dieu et la glorieuse Vierge Marie, Monseigneur S. Claude, et Monseigneur S. Blayse me soient en ayde." He terms the cause of his death catarrh and apoplexy, and asserts that the physicians had observed indications of the crisis several days before it occurred; the best they had hoped seems to have been paralysis of the arms. Some historians have declared that he was poisoned with an orange, but there seems no proof of this.

Jean Molinet says of this prince, "Il fust advesti et doé de propriétés vertueuses, car il estoit doux, gracieux, libéral, très vaillant aux armes: prince très catholique, et qui pugnissoit aigrement les blasphémateurs du nom de Nostre Seigneur."

The same chronicler bears testimony to the resemblance of the effigy on the tomb of Charles VIII., at St. Denis, to the original. After alluding to the last rites of sepulture, and stating that the royal corpse was "magnifiquement tumulé," he continued, "et pour singulière chose, non veue, la reputation et

figure d'iceluy roy estoit par art subtil et peintures exquises, tout bien tiré après le vif, qu'il sembloit proprement estre résuscité, plein d'esprit et vie."

The instant the breath was out of the king's body—with the exception of some attached personal attendants to whom the king had greatly endeared himself—every one of the courtiers forsook the corpse and galloped off to Blois to salute the new sovereign.

"I arrived," says Commines, "at Amboise two days after the king's death, and went immediately to pray beside the royal corpse, remaining by it five or six hours. Among the servants and officers of the palace the mourning was deep and sincere."

Commines' expressions of tender and respectful affection for this amiable prince must be read to be appreciated; he says, "La plus douce et plus humaine parole d'homme qui jamois fut, étoit la sienne; car je crois que jamais à homme ne dit chose qui lui deut déplaire."

Charles's sudden death, on the eve of a fresh military expedition, naturally enough gave rise to rumours unfavourable to the king's enemies, and it was of course attributed to poison, in those days in which kings seldom came to their end, *siccâ morte*. But the suspicion never was authenticated.

Of Charles's marriage with Anne, three sons had been the issue. All these were born and died at Amboise in their early infancy, so that Louis's succession was undisputed.

On the demise of her husband, the royal widow remained for two days prostrated on the ground, refusing all sustenance. The mourning she wore was of the deepest black, although up to that time the weeds of queens had always been white; and when her ladies were deploring that she should find herself at

so early an age a childless widow, she replied that she could never descend to marry any one of lower rank than the husband she had lost.

However, it was not long before the very scene of Charles's death became that of her marriage with his successor, Louis, to whom she had been attached previously to her union with Charles, and who was doubly anxious for the alliance, in order to secure to France the territories she had declared her intention of withdrawing on the death of Charles.

At the time of Charles's decease Louis was, nevertheless, in some disgrace with the Queen, owing to an unintentional offence he had given some time before.

It appears that on the death of the last of her three children, the Dauphin Charles, the queen had been seized with deep melancholy, and in order to divert her mind Louis had advised the king to give a masquerade at court. A grand fête was accordingly organised at Amboise, at which Louis appeared, and, in order to amuse the queen, he invented and took part in a ridiculous dance with a certain lady of the court. The gaiety of his demeanour was interpreted by Anne to proceed from his joy at the death of the Dauphin, which rendered him once more heir presumptive to the crown, and she took such displeasure at it, that she desired he would immediately withdraw from the court and retire to Blois.

Louis seems to have understood how to manage even the most wayward of the sex, and he must have regained the favour of Anne without much loss of time, seeing how very speedily this second marriage took place, although the king had to rid himself of a serious obstacle, for he had already one wife—Jeanne de France.

Jean Molinet gives a florid account of the wedding festivities

held in celebration of the marriage of Anne de Bretagne, "vefve du feu roy Charles, huitiesme de ce nom," and the "roy Loys de France, douziesme de ce nom,"* but he also adds some details of the manner in which it was regarded by the country—"car encoire estoit vivante Madame Jehanne de France, fille du roy Loys onziesme de ce nom, sœur germaine du roy Charles lors trepassé; N'est merviel se Madame Jehanne de France, sachant ce mariaige contracté, ne feust angoisseusement desplaisantée." He asserts that, although this marriage had not been blessed with any issue, "le roy Loys" had never made any objection to or complaint about it before, but only as soon as Anne became a widow, and he had the power and authority of a king to support his new caprice. However, he managed to obtain a divorce by the authority of the Holy See, on the ground that he had been forced into the marriage against his own inclination, by Louis XI., Jeanne's father. Louis's ingratitude to the woman whose devoted affection had sustained and consoled him in the time of adversity, who had shared the rigours of his cruel imprisonment at Bourges, who had nursed him with a fidelity and attachment rarely equalled, when he was lingering at the very gates of death, and whose untiring perseverance had procured his liberation, is a blot on the character of the "Père du Peuple," which shows his domestic, in a less favourable light than his public, character.

Jeanne, with a sweetness and self-abnegation which had always distinguished her, and have won for her from succeeding generations that sympathy and admiration she failed to draw from the irresponsive husband she had so generously loved, finding that he would be happier without her, nobly withdrew her claims to his consideration and meekly retired into a convent at Bourges,

* This marriage was solemnized on the octave of the Feast of the Circumcision, 8th January, 1498, at the Château de Namur.

where she ended her pious life, having founded the order of the "Annunciation."

She had borne Louis' indifference with uncomplaining resignation, but had not felt it the less deeply—

> "Even as the ocean suffers
> The angry bark to plough through her billows,
> And yet is presently so smooth, the eye
> Cannot perceive where the wide wound was made;"

yet he never seems to have been touched by her gentle unobtrusive love, or to have expressed any compunction even on her death.

Louis, who had been attached to his royal brother-in-law and cousin, seems to have shared many of his tastes; he not only succeeded with apparent satisfaction to his throne and his wife, but selected as his chief residence that palace which had also been Charles's favourite abode. Matters, however, went on somewhat tamely at court under this prudent and sagacious monarch, and having earned the title of "Père du Peuple," he determined to merit it by avoiding all unnecessary expenses, which would have necessitated the imposition of new taxes. "Peu liberal estoit-il," says Du Bellay, "de peur de fouler le peuple, car les dons et les dépenses espuisent le trésor, tant grand qu'il soit," so that this reign contributed little or nothing, whether to the internal decoration or the external embellishment of the fabric of the château, and few festivities enlivened its sober annals.

He was a good king, nevertheless, and a worthy man in many respects—was Louis XII. He loved children in general, and he loved his own in particular, and when he successively lost his two Dauphins, he sent for the young Duc d'Angoulême and his mother, Louise de Savoie, to Amboise, and the boy became his pet and his companion. Thus the infancy and boyhood of

François I., under the tutelage of Madame Louise, was passed in the antique family *manoir* of Louis XII. Here the monarch could breathe and stretch his limbs after the fatigues of office in his capital, and, in fact, led there the life of a wealthy country gentleman with his family about him.

We find in the writings of the contemporary historians many interesting pictures of the domestic life of the court at this time.

When Fleuranges, better known as Robert de la Marck, son of the "Boar of Ardennes," and styled "*le jeune adventureux*," came to live at Blois, he found M. d'Angoulême, and the young nobles who were his companions and playmates, passing their recreation time at shooting with the bow, and Fleuranges loves to tell how he and the young "*sire*" played together at *l'escaigne*, a game brought from Italy, played with a very large ball full of wind. He assures us that François (who seems to have done everything well) "étoit un des plus gentils archers et des plus forts que l'on a point veu de son temps." He tells us also how he and "le jeune Sieur d'Angoulesme laschaient des pants de rets et toute manière de harnois pour prendre les cerfs et les bêtes sauvages; comment ils tiroient de la serpentine avec des petites flêches après un blanc en une porte pour veoir qui tireroit le plus près."

A long list he gives us of the childish sports which amused the rosy hours of François' boyish days, and then he informs us how, after they "devinrent plus grands," they began to wear miniature armour, and to take their pastime in arranging jousts and tournaments—"De toutes les sortes qu'on se pouvoit deviser, et ne feust qu'à jouster au vent, à la selle dessainglée ou la nappe, et croy que jamais prince n'eust plus de passe-tems qu'avoit mon dict sieur, et estre mieux endoctriné, que Madame sa mère l'a tousjours nourry."

It was the very mid-day of chivalry, the period of the noble education even of varlets; the Maréchal de Gyé, premier governeur of the young Count d'Angoulême, watched with pride and joy the development of his limbs in all their strength and suppleness, and the distinguishing characteristics of race he exhibited. His reading comprised all the chivalresque literature in existence, and he devoured it with an eagerness which enchanted his preceptors—"La Branche aux royaux lignages," the romances of Roland and Olivier, of Amadis of Gaul, &c., and with them the young *alumnus* seemed to imbibe a courageous and intrepid character.

The literary preceptor of François was a worthy "gentilhomme Poitevin," named Artus de Gouffier-Boisy (son of the Sénéchal de Saintonge, and formerly *enfant d'honneur* of Charles VIII.), learned in all things, and not only an eloquent speaker, but a wonderful Latin scholar. It was he who, to express the fiery character of his royal charge, designed the emblem he afterwards adopted—a salamander in the midst of flames, with the motto, "Nutrisco et extinguo."

Gouffier de Boisy had the good sense not to make the prince simply a *savant* and an erudite: a brave chevalier himself, he strove to inspire him with his own enthusiasm for valour and warlike enterprise, and, above all, an instinct for all that was new and adventurous. There was at this moment going on throughout Europe the germination of that revolution that soon followed in art and science. If mediævality still survived in the chivalresque manners of a certain portion of society, and continued to characterise château life, general habits of life were at the same time undergoing a visible transformation. These changes could not take place suddenly; they developed by a very gradual progress, and the infancy of François I. had been naturally influenced by the growing symptoms of the coming

alteration. To the quaint and simple education of the sixteenth century, to the narrow and limited instructions of chivalry, was succeeding the not less narrow pedantry of those new *literati*, who for a time kept learning to themselves, and piqued themselves on the conscious superiority they derived from its exclusive monopoly.

The university was becoming as powerful as chivalry once had been; the parliament was gradually usurping its rights over those of the nobility: in art, the Roman form, with Roman taste generally, was about to assert its superiority. The French army had so often crossed the Alps and saluted Italy, that with their return, Latin influences and Latin instruction had invaded the country; renovation was the order of the day. François, Duc d'Angoulême, received from his earliest childhood the living impress of things new and striking. Past times had no attraction for him, except as a contrast to those which he saw were fast coming, and no interest but in the great deeds of those whom he only regarded as ancestors of a rising generation. Imbued with new principles and new motives, his curiosity bore entirely upon the future before him, in which he saw he had a large part to play. Added to all this, at an early age he had been an exceptional jouster, vanquisher in all tourneys, and when scarcely twelve years old he was already the noblest horseman of all his young companions. First and foremost in all games of strength and skill, his elegant and muscular figure, his open, generous, and handsome countenance, his dignified and majestic demeanour already distinguished him, even among such men as De Montmorency, De Brion, De Fleuranges, the *enfans d'honneur* specially selected to attend him.*

François had thus been "at home" from his earliest days

* Capefigue.

at Amboise with good King Louis, who had always taken special notice of this noble child since the death of his own son, whom he seemed in some sort to replace. The king had always looked forward to the marriage of François with his eldest and best beloved daughter, Claude. Louise de Savoie did not desire this marriage more ardently than did the king, and it was at Amboise that that ceremonious betrothal and the royal courtship took place; but François was attached to Amboise by other and yet earlier recollections of a scarcely less tender nature. It had been, as we have said, the very cradle of his infant years, and his careless childhood had been fostered there beneath the genial sunshine of a mother's love. There it was, too, that he and that sister Marguerite, whom he idolised, and between whom and him, the fraternal tie was the strongest that either ever knew, together learned their earliest lessons and culled their first flowers in childhood's joyous days—the only flowers that know no thorns!

François was singularly blessed in his family affections, for Louise de Savoie was a mother such as rarely falls to the lot of kings. Her devotion to him knew no bounds, and he never discovered, until he lost her, all that she had been to him. Largely as he returned her affection, it was only when the whole weight of the crown which she had so skilfully and devotedly shared came to be sustained by himself alone, that he did full justice to her ability, and could appreciate the intensity and unselfishness of her attachment.

One of the most interesting chronicles of the time, and one which throws considerable light on the early days of François' life—passed, with occasional absences, at Amboise—is to be found in the daily notes of Louise de Savoie; it may almost be called a "mother's diary," for it relates almost entirely to him whom the proud mother even then, styles "Mon Seigneur, mon

César, et mon Roy." The following extracts from these touching and minute entries, breathing the deepest maternal love, are characteristic of the rest:—

"Le jour de la Conversion de S. Paul, 25 Janvier, l'an 1501, environ deux heures après midi, mon Roy, mon Seigneur, mon César, et mon fils, estant à Amboise, fust emporté au travers des champs par une hacquenée que lui avaist donnée le Maréchal de Gyé, et fust le danger si grand, que ceux qui estoient présents l'estimèrent irréparable; toutefois Dieu, protecteur des femmes veufves, et deffenseur des orphelins, prévoyant les choses futures, ne me voulut abandonner, cognoissant que si cas fortuit m'eust si soudainement privée de mon amour, jeusse été trop infortunée."

All heroes, whether of fact or fiction, have to pass through some such perils as this. It is the conventional ordeal of red-hot ploughshares over which history loves to carry with triumphant issue, those who are subsequently destined to embellish her page, and doubtless the youthful and widowed duchess whose soul was centred in her child would be tempted to magnify the boy's feat and her own fears on so signal an occasion.

On the 24th October of the following year, the prince being still at Amboise, occurs in this curious old diary the record of, perhaps, her child's first sorrow in the death of his "*petit toutou*, Happeguai, qui estoit de bon amour et loyal à son maistre." There is something inexpressibly touching in the simplicity of this little entry.

On the 3rd August, when François was rising fourteen, we find in the diary of his affectionate mother a note to the effect that—"En ce tems, Louis Douze estant roi de France, mon fils partit d'Amboise pour estre homme de cour, et me laissa seule." Poor Louise de Savoie! her whole being was concentrated in the bright and promising young prince, and when for the first

time they are separated she feels as if she were alone in the world.

It is interesting to trace the tide of human passions throughout all ranks and in all times. When we read the tales of those brave days of chivalry and courage, in which wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters, parted cheerfully with the dearest treasures of their hearts, even urging them to assume the cross and take their uncertain journey to that far-off land where war, though sanctified by the holiness of its cause, was not less perilous, we are inclined to doubt whether modern civilisation would produce as much courage; and we are compelled to confess that, in self-devotion and moral energy, "there were giants in those days." At the same time, we feel that mediæval parents, however heroic, had women's hearts; and when we trace, in the simple and loving words of Louise de Savoie, the depth of her fondness for her boy, we remember that "he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."

On the 7th September, 1502, she writes again:—"Mon fils passa à Amboise pour m'y voyre, avant d'aller en Guienne contre les Espagnols, et estoit maintenant Lieutenant-général du Roy Louis XII." Only eighteen, and already a general! We like this record—brief as it is, it says so much. We see the mother's pride in the early promotion of her son; and this evidence of his reciprocal regard for her is very gratifying.

On François establishing his court at Amboise, the following distich was made on himself and his immediate predecessors:—

> "Quand la 'Pasques-Dieu' décéda, (Louys XI.)
> Par la 'Pour-Dieu' lui succéda, (Charles VIII.)
> 'Le Diable m'emporte' s'en tint près, (Louys XII.)
> 'Foy de gentilhomme' vint après. (François I.)"

these being the favourite oaths by the use of which these four

monarchs were distinguished—and a significant mode of distinction too, we may add. Very characteristic was the change in all that existed within and about the old castle under its new master: all things animate and inanimate seemed to spring into a new being: the tangled forests were cleared, and once more rang with the exciting blast of the horn, while the baying of the hounds, the view-halloo of the huntsman, and the eager trample of hoofs, again awakened the gladsome echoes of those darkling woods. The courts and gardens resounded with the busy tread of many feet, and the heretofore grass-grown pavements resumed their congenial aspect. As the young monarch was full of health, and life, and spirits, and inspired by brightly-tinted anticipations of a glorious future, he made all feel young and hopeful around him—so the old walls caught the genial inspiration, and almost ceased to look grim.

We pass over a few years spent in absence from the scenes of his infancy—years in which the boy, before whom so magnificent a future was to unroll, had become a man; and not only a man, but one of the most accomplished and intelligent, as well as most magnificent and admired, men of his time. He is once more at Amboise, now a bridegroom, and soon to be a father. His young wife, Claude de France, who brings him a splendid dowry, is likewise the object of the queen-mother's affection, and that mother, who had watched over his infancy, directed his youth, and rejoiced in his success, who had shared not only the glory of his throne, but the burdens of the state inseparable from it, never ceased, while she lived, to keep the minutest memoranda of all that befell him.

Although Claude was a gentle and amiable princess, her personal attractions were not great; they were scarcely calculated, therefore, to fascinate the heart of so fastidious a man as François; and we are scarcely surprised that a succession of

royal favourites, chosen as François alone had power to choose, served to distract the king's mind and to reconcile him to his marriage.

To his brief admiration of the beautiful Diane de Poitiers, succeeded his passionate attachment for a woman who made herself remarkable by the position she assumed in a character as yet undefined, if not unrecognised, at court.

Among the maids of honour who surrounded Madame Louise de Savoie, we are told, was one of singular beauty. She was the daughter of Phœbus de Foix, who has handed down to posterity a reputation great in all that concerns the chase. Françoise de Foix, claiming to be of that illustrious line which boasted a collateral right to the throne of Navarre, had been, while yet a child, betrothed to Jean de Laval de Montmorency, Seigneur de Châteaubriand. Her education had been imparted, and her mind formed, in the ancient solitudes of Brittany; but when Louise de Savoie, in her desire to enliven her court, had collected around her the noblest and most beautiful women of the kingdom, Françoise de Châteaubriand was invited to return and become one of them; for when there, none, perhaps, had been more prominent in the festivities of Amboise. Françoise, however, needed her high-born husband's consent to this attractive proposal, and the task of obtaining it was no easy one. The Sieur de Laval held his own notions about the court of François, and he had no mind to let his wife make one of Madame Louise's ladies. He, therefore, had two rings made, each stamped with his signet, and on his departure, he carried away one on his own finger, leaving the other with Françoise, accompanying the gift with strict injunctions that she was to disregard all invitations to appear at court until she received the permission from himself, accompanied by the duplicate ring as a pledge of its authenticity.

Now this said ring was closely kept in the possession of the jealous husband; but what is there that love—especially the love of a king, and a great and powerful king—cannot effect? François determined to have the ring, with all that depended on his possession of it; and, of course, he had no sooner communicated this resolve to a trusty confidant, than efficient machinery was put in motion to satisfy the imperious demand.

In a short time the coveted jewel was in François' hands; and provided with this powerful talisman the rest was easy. Françoise de Châteaubriand, whether willingly or unwittingly deceived by the ring, appeared at court, and before the Sieur de Laval was aware she had left his home, she held an established position at Amboise. François was enchanted with his new mistress, and it was not long before this absorbing passion became the theme of the whole court. Louise de Savoie appears to have taken it to heart, rather with the jealousy of a discarded rival, than the anxious, but dispassionate solicitude of a mother. She was deeply wounded. The tender affection which had hitherto always subsisted between her and her son had been not only sincere and devoted, but it had never been interfered with by another attachment, and had been expressed by the amplest confidence on either side. Louise now felt that the first stone in that firm foundation was loosened; and when she saw that another woman had a prior claim to her own in that heart which had hitherto been undividedly hers, she began to realise the possibility that the whole fabric on which she had hitherto built, without a suspicion of its fragility, might now at any time give way. From that hour an antagonistic feeling established itself, as if by common consent, between the mother and the mistress; and well would it have been for François had the mother carried the day, and rid him of her adversary. The favourite, however, retained her mighty hold

on François' heart. Her husband, disgusted with her infidelity to himself, nourished in his heart a desperate vengeance, though he dared not openly exhibit his real feelings either to his faithless wife or the despotic monarch who had robbed him of his one ewe-lamb. History would have us believe, however, that François' reckless indulgence of this ill-advised attachment taught him a bitter lesson, and planted more than one thorn in the path of roses he thought to strew for himself.

François' passion for Madame de Châteaubriand, violent as it was, was not eternal, though it required the charms of an Anne de Pisseleu to efface it from his heart.

Within a year of François' marriage, we learn, from the diary of Louise de Savoie, particulars of the birth, at Amboise, of the first of that numerous progeny which sprang from François' recently contracted union with a "fille de France." It stands thus:—

"Charlotte, fille de mon fils, fust née à Amboise, le 10 Oct^re^ 1516, à six heurs 44 minutes avant midi."

Eleven months later, their first-born son, François, heir to the throne of Charlemagne, first saw the light in that same old royal castle. Great were the rejoicings on this auspicious occasion. The Dauphin du Viennois, as this child was called, was the centre of a nation's hopes, and in him all Europe recognised the renewed stability of the crown of France.

With the exception of the three infant children of Charles VIII. and Anne of Brittany, who had scarcely survived their births, and the two short-lived sons of Louis XII. by the same queen, there had not been a Dauphin since Charles VIII. himself. The infant prince was therefore not only the pride and joy of his parents, but the idol of the nation, whose hopes were at once centred in his little life. From the hour of his birth, he was his father's favourite child, and he could scarcely have

loved him more tenderly had he known how soon he was to lose him.

The baptismal fêtes on this occasion were such as might have been expected during such a reign and under such peculiar circumstances, and they were followed three days after by the wedding festivities of the Duc d'Urbino with the daughter of the Duc de Bourbon. "Feust dancé et baillé le possible," says the chronicle which records it. But a few days subsequently a scene of a different nature marks the annals of Amboise.

François had just concluded a concordat with the Pope Leo X., but the parliament, dissatisfied with the terms, which they considered prejudicial to the Gallican Church, sent to the Château d'Amboise a deputation to remonstrate against the king's policy.

The Chancelier Duprat refused during six weeks to grant to the deputation the audience they sought, so that although they had arrived on the 13th January, they were only received by the king on the 26th February. François overwhelmed them with harsh terms; they attempted to reply by argument.

"Apprenez," replied the king, cutting short their observations, "qu'il n'y a qu'un roi en France. . . . . Mélez-vous de juger les procès, c'est votre métier. . . . . Allez," continued he, "partez demain avant le lever du soleil."

The poor devils were in woeful plight, between their fear of displeasing so arbitrary a monarch and the impracticability of the roads, which were flooded by the melting of the snow and the overflow of the rivers. In their perplexity they applied to the lord high steward to obtain for them a delay of a few days. The king was inexorable.

"If," answered he, "they are not off by six o'clock to-morrow morning, they shall have twelve of my archers at their heels, who will clap them into one of the trenches, where I

will keep them six months, and I should like to see the man who ventures to fetch them out."

To return to the Dauphin, Brantôme describes this prince as a boy of unusual promise, and as we read the record of his virtues, we feel that the bitterness of his father's grief was justified. The mystery surrounding the circumstances of his singular death, in 1536, was never satisfactorily cleared up, and strong suspicions seem to have fallen not only upon Charles Quint, but, with more probability perhaps, upon that ingenious and unscrupulous politician, Catherine de Medicis, the fascinating Florentine princess, then just married to the prince's next brother Henri, afterwards Henri II. — for we are forstalling events by concluding this melancholy episode here. The "removal" of the elder son was so favourable to Catherine's ambitious projects, that it is not very surprising she should have been supposed to assist it, though some have taken great pains to whitewash her of this and many other delinquencies imputed to her by the always dubious voice of History.

The fatal occurrence is thus related by the chroniclers of the time. One day, when François was about nineteen, he had been exercising himself by playing at ball, when, feeling fatigued and thirsty, he desired a page who was in waiting, to fetch him a drink of water. Now the Prince was accustomed to use a drinking-cup, which had been given him by Donna Agnez Beatrix Pachecho, maid of honour to the Queen Eleanor of Portugal (afterwards second wife of François I). This cup is so curiously described by Brantôme, that it may be worth while to record his account of it. It was composed "d'une terre tanée si subtile, et si fine qu'on dirait une terre sigilée; et portait telle vertue que quelque eau froide que vous y mettiez dedans, vous la verrez bouillir et faire de petits bouil-

lons comme si elle estait sur le feu : et s'y pourtant n'en perd sa fraicheur, mais l'entretient ; et jamais l'eau ne faist mal à qui la boit, quelque chaud qu'il aye, ou quelque exercise violant qu'il face." It was this cup, then, that the page fetched, and the prince having taken a draught from it, it was set down on the edge of the well. In the meantime—for the miscreant who did the deed afterwards made a full confession of his guilt—a fellow, whom no one happened to notice, adroitly mingled himself among the royal attendants, and watching his opportunity contrived, unseen, to introduce a pinch of a very subtle poison he carried, into the cup, after which he remained standing about, maintaining a pleasant and smiling countenance to avoid suspicion. The prince having again called for water, the page (instead of rinsing the vessel as he should have done) contented himself with filling it up, and handed it to the prince, who this time emptied it. Very shortly after he swooned, and his death followed rapidly. The despair of the king, as we have already said, was overwhelming; he suspected the iniquity, and took such measures for its discovery, that the agent by whose means the cruel act had been perpetrated was shortly after taken, questioned, tried, and finally, executed.

François was not with his son at the time of his death. Overwhelmed with troubles on all sides, from enemies whose aggressions he was perplexed how to repel, he was at Amboise, impatiently awaiting the arrival of this his eldest and best beloved son, who though only aged nineteen, was already his chief companion and the sharer of his most secret thoughts. On the day when the prince's return was to have taken place, the king was pacing the *grande salle* of the palace. Suddenly the noise of a cavalcade aroused his attention, and the king prepared to embrace his son. What was his consternation, then, when he saw the Cardinal de Lorraine, who had accompanied

the prince, enter his presence alone. His first question was, "How is my son?" The prelate, who saw the king's anxiety in the impetuosity of his tone, dared not reply, and muttering a few words, in which all that could be heard were "danger," "hope," "resignation," he betrayed the fatal truth. "Ah!" exclaimed François aghast, "mon fils est mort, mon fils est mort—vous voulez en vain ménager son malheureux père!" At these words the Cardinal fairly broke down, and losing all command over himself, could only mingle his tears with those of the distracted father. "The king's grief seemed in an instant to be communicated to every one; the *salle*," says Brantôme, "became a scene of desolation and woe. François tottered rather than walked to a window, and raising his hands and eyes to heaven prayed fervently for his son, for himself, and for his people; he offered to God this painful sacrifice with the weakness of a father, the courage of a hero, and the piety of a Christian."

François called to him his second son Henri, embraced him weeping, and addressed him, as Mezerai tells us, in the following words:—"My son, you have lost a model, and I a support. The universal grief which has followed your brother's death justifies our tears, and testifies to the greatness of our loss. The example of your brother would have been your guiding-star in the career of honour, let his memory inspire and direct you; heir to his rank and great expectations, be also the inheritor of his brilliant and promising qualities; they would have been my joy, let your reproduction of them be my consolation. Emulate your brother's character, and as you can never make me forget, let your aim be ever to remind me of him."

The court was present and melted into tears; the prince was deeply moved; the king seemed overwhelmed, and for some

days his state was alarming, but he ended by recovering his self-possession, and with that courage which formed part of his character, he set himself arduously to the duties of his high state, which at this particular moment claimed all his attention.

To return to the youthful *ménage* at Amboise; the birth of the Princesse Charlotte and of the Dauphin François were soon followed by that of another princess named Louise, and strangely enough all these children (besides the next-beloved pet of his father, the bright and joyous Charles, Duc d'Orléans) preceded their parents to the tomb.

Apropos of Charles d'Orléans—the pride and delight of his father, his "little Guichardet"—we may state here a circumstance connected with his early years, which serves to shew what manner of youth he was, and helps us to deplore the loss of one who might have become so spirited a king.

One night when the king and court had retired to rest, and the old château of Amboise was subsiding into repose, the prince, feeling no inclination to follow their sober example, called to his young companions to attend him, and went out for a frolic.

"Let us go," he said, "and give a dressing to these overbearing old burghers, who arrogate to themselves so much authority. Let us see if they still dare to usurp a right of passage over these public bridges, and make them smart for their bumptiousness."

No sooner said than done. The young fellows who followed their prince were in high glee at the idea of an encounter in so legitimate a cause, for they were the sons of brave and valiant *gentilshommes*, and among them were the Seigneurs de Gascogne and de Castelnau. The latter, in fact, headed the expedition, little dreaming what the result of this freak would be, to himself.

Having reached the bridges, they found them, as they had

expected, in possession of those "Jacks in office," who, not recognising the prince and his suite, were imprudently maintaining their hold, and demanding imposts of all who attempted to cross them.

M. d'Orléans came down upon them unexpectedly with his troop, and charged them. Thus attacked, they drew their arms and began to defend themselves with vigour, so that one of them, a powerful varlet, having come to hand and hand combat with the prince, was on the point of killing him—for he was bolder and put himself more forward than the rest—when M. de Castelnau threw himself between the combatants, received the blow, and fell dead at his master's feet. When the burghers saw what had happened, and learned from the prince's attendants who he was, they naturally enough took alarm, and longed to escape as best they might, leaving the prince, master of the bridge. But the triumph of the young duke was not of much avail. He ordered M. de Castelnau's body to be carried back to the château, and wept sincerely over him, for he was doubly attached to him, in that, besides being his intimate friend, it was to save his life that he gave his own.

The next day, the king having heard of this *esclandre*, was furious against his son, whom he reproved with great severity, saying that, if he liked to risk his own life, he was not justified in losing those of brave cavaliers who had been placed near him to defend his person and help him to maintain his dignity. The prince was of a generous nature, and his spirit revolted at this calculating view of the occurrence, so that he replied, with vehemence, that he had loved M. de Castelnau for his own sake, and not for the use he would have been to him. The king continued displeased for some days, but as he could not restore the dead to life, and, moreover, as he was fondly attached to his son, he soon forgot and forgave the offence.

Brantôme remarks on the singular coincidence which twice rendered Amboise fatal to the representative of the De Castelnau family. Twenty-five years after the Sieur de Castelnau was slain in the *rixe* on the bridge, his younger brother, who had inherited his name and fortune, being taken by treachery, came to be beheaded in the trenches of the castle for his part in the famous conspiracy of Amboise.

Amboise was at this time a favourite resort of François' sister, Marguerite, wife of the Duc d'Alençon, whose delight it was to pass with her brother all the time she could possibly snatch from her own home and the duties of her position. The affection which subsisted between this royal brother and sister had been, as we have said, unusually tender and devoted, from their earliest childhood; but after the touching proof she had given the king of her unalterable attachment, during his sickness and captivity at Madrid, he had loved her more fondly than ever. He called her his "mignonne," his "Marguérite des Marguérites," his "perle des perles," and never forgot the pinnacle of admiration to which, even while yet a child, she had been exalted in consequence of her precocious intelligence, her wit, her learning, beauty, grace, and elegance. All these had increased with her years, while François had, in the meantime, become the most admired of his sex, for his imposing presence, his chivalrous bearing, high spirit, and courteous manners. Marguerite was no more blind to these attractions than to that "invincible charme" which all contemporary writers agree in telling us pervaded his whole demeanour. "Aussi," say the old chroniclers, "elle n'aimait qu'Amboise, et residait tant qu'elle le pouvait à l'abri de ses tourelles." In its shady alleys they walked and communed together, and here it was that were compiled the pages of that lively and singular production which Marguerite lived to contemplate with feelings

very different from those which inspired her to become its author.

Here it was that the royal brother and sister, whose tastes were so similar, that whatever the one enjoyed was also a pleasure to the other, received the homage of all the *literati* of the day; here they delighted to study the romaunts and chivalresque poems, whether of their own or earlier times, exhaling the spirit of the age and illustrating all the idiosyncrasies of the feudal period, from which they emanated.

They did well to make the most of it, for its days were already numbered; that period, soon about to pass away, was already on the wane, and the delusive brightness it still retained was but borrowed from the sunset glows of its departing glory: it may be regarded as the reign of Poetry, for she found, in the tastes and sentiments of the age, all that could sustain and exalt her. "No poetical reputation since achieved," says Capefigue, "ever obtained such admiration as was bestowed on that pleiades of mediæval romances, from Roland to Launcelot du Lac and Tristan de Lionoys; for the triumph of mediæval literature culminated in its popular ballads, and chivalrous romance enjoyed an undisputed sway in France during the years comprised between the reigns of Charles VI. and Henry II." But it did more than serve to amuse the mind, it elevated the heart and directed the passions: to it, may be traced the exalted—not to say exaggerated—notions of self-devotion, courage, and honour, which distinguish the great men of that generation, and lifted them above the vices of their day.

That age, like others, was what its literature had made it; and to those who could appreciate its meaning, that literature suggested noble thoughts and inspired corresponding actions. It is in the literary effusions of the times that we find mirrored

the secret springs which actuated the heroes who illustrated the period.

Of the somewhat abstruse and difficult poems of those days, couched in a dialect scarcely intelligible unless to the initiated and refined—so to speak, the upper stratum of society—many were rendered into prose translations, and to this circumstance we owe it, that ideas originally expressed in language now obsolete, have been preserved and transmitted in a comprehensible form to succeeding generations.

This process supplied a considerable amount of literary reputation to the learned enthusiasts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; it was thus, the exploits of Charlemagne and the vast train of adventurous paladins, whose names glitter in the subsequent annals of chivalry, were handed down to later times, suggesting a continuation of similar recitals. The introduction of printing at such a moment produced, of course, the most striking results, and among the most popular works contemporary with its invention, which have survived into our own times, the "Quatre Fils d'Aymon," still so popular, was one which dates from the age of François I., and its perusal formed one of his favourite pastimes. François and Marguerite obtained a well-merited and widely-spread reputation as patrons and admirers of letters generally, but they accorded a decided preference to works of a romantic character.

Such being the recognised predilections of the king, the majority of contemporary writers naturally cultivated that style most likely to bring them under the royal notice, and strove to excel in what would be acceptable to him. Several of the king's *valets de chambre*, among whom rose conspicuous Clément Marot,* Salet, Sainct Gelois, Baïf, and others, courted the king's favour by presenting him with compositions suited to his tastes,

* Marot's translation of the Psalms and the stir that it made at the time will be remembered. However, he never got further than the fiftieth, and Théodore

and they and all others whose chivalrous romances began now to abound, were treated with honour and distinction. It was not surprising, then, that multitudes of poetasters, as well as of poets, were attracted to Amboise, where they were sure of a flattering reception, and the king and Marguerite soon brought upon themselves a mass of dedications, more or less acceptable.

Treatises on hunting, falconry, and all other games and sports peculiar to that reckless court, and indulged in largely at Amboise, also found great favour there, and the name of Phœbus de Foix, author of the disquisition, "Des Bestes Sauvages et des Oyseaux de Proie," was echoed far and wide by the votaries of the *cor de chasse*—that instrument which always made sweet music in François' ears. The ingenuity with which this same Phœbus combines theology and venery is most amusing, and his style is only to be paralleled by that of our own quaint old Izaak Walton.

This early literature forms an attractive incident in the picturesque times in which its infant lot was cast, and François I.'s fostering notice of its opening efforts was not less generous than his patronage of all else that was calculated to embellish and enlarge the mind; we consequently find, in the "économies royales" of this reign, entries of important payments, whether in donations or provisions, granted as rewards of literary merit, scientific observation, artistic success, or progress in industry and manufacture. Whithersoever François went he collected round him a gallery of articles of taste and virtù; but, unfortunately, the treasures of genius, whether in sculpture, painting, carving, pottery, enamel, cinque-cento jewelry, &c., which once embellished the Château d'Amboise, have been

de Bige translated the remaining hundred. We may add that this psalter was adopted by Calvin, and was used in the French Protestant churches until the year 1695, when, the language having undergone great alterations, Conrad and La Bastide gave a new version, which was then substituted for the other.

removed thence to swell the cabinets of galleries and museums. Well François knew how to appreciate these objects, and to reward their artificers.

The "Bibliothèque du Roi," which has survived to be styled "Bibliothèque Impériale," collected in the first instance by Charles V. at the time of the invention of printing, did not amount to more than 500 MSS., and to François I. fell the glory of founding a library, brought together with no small pains from every part of Europe. Every one of his country residences was supplied with this to him necessary adjunct; for, although he loved the pleasures of the chase, the excitement of war, and chivalrous sports, and entered into the festivities of the court with the delight of a child, his *délassements* were those of a cultivated mind, and the atmosphere he breathed was redolent of refinement. Thus Amboise, Blois, Chenonceaux, Fontainebleau, each possessed a choice and valuable library, and François testified his veneration for the authors he admired by the costly and elegant bindings in which he enshrined their works.

Notwithstanding the progress and success of the dawning northern schools, under the auspices of Van Eyck, Holbein, Albert Durer, and others, François seems to have disdained the adoption of any art on this side of the Alps, and to have resolved to model his taste upon the types produced by the luxuriant South. There a new era was developing itself, and a new genius was boldly emancipating itself from the quaintness of mediæval trammels.

The elegant and imposing architecture of Italy, the rounded contours and flowing draperies of the Florentine masters, captivated the cultivated eye of François, who recognised the beauty of the antique type and hailed the revival of classic taste. If Michael Angelo claimed his veneration as sculptor, architect,

and draughtsman, if Benvenuto Cellini charmed him with his exquisite modelling—in painting, Leonardo da Vinci was the man after François' own heart, and, in the sweetly expressive oval faces and exquisite types of his divine pencil, we have the very reproduction of the images which must have passed through such a mind as that of François I., though he lacked the power to express his thoughts on the canvas. This was the essence of that style of which François longed to be the founder: from the moment he had seen and studied the productions of Spain, of Florence, of Milan, his eye detected all the imperfections of mediæval taste; and, of all that had distinguished that period, as Capefigue has justly observed, chivalry was the only phase he desired to retain.

Among the men of genius of the day attracted by the irresistible charm of François' conversation to the court of France, none was a greater favourite with the king than this same Leonardo da Vinci, and to have him near his person François established him in the Château de Clos, about two miles distant from Amboise. To François' sincere sorrow, the veteran artist, then in his 73rd year, only survived two years to enjoy the royal friendship which honoured alike the king and the painter.

This Château de Clos was, after the death of Da Vinci, given by Louise de Savoie to Marie Gaudin, reputed mistress, in very early days, of François I., and wife of Babou de la Bourdaisie.

Leonardo da Vinci died on the 2nd May, 1519, recording in his will, dated 18th April, 1518, his express desire that he should be interred in the church of St. Florentin at Amboise; but it seems doubtful if this behest ever was complied with, and some suppose that he was buried in that of St. Denis, at Amboise.

Of the king's unsparing liberality when indulging his taste

for architecture, we have surviving evidence in every château that he inhabited, and, notwithstanding the devastation that has taken place at Amboise, we can still trace the unmistakable signs of his passage. Those well-known alternate panels, as infallible as a very autograph, enclosing the "F *couronné*" for François, and the "C *couronné*" for Claude, mingled with his *dévise*, the salamander, on a field powdered with flames, and the motto, "Nutrisco et extinguo," and *hers*, the ermine passant, on a field of gold, meet us everywhere. Beside these, in a proximity which, in these days, we scarcely understand, we find the frequent monogram, "FD," closely intertwined, or the D singly of Diane, accompanied by her chaste and not very appropriate *dévise*, the crescent moon.

François I. was of that self-indulgent type that he must often have sighed after a new pleasure; accordingly, knowing his love for manly exercises and sports of all kinds, we are not much surprised to find that, on his return from Spain, the national pastime of that country was introduced into France. The sanguinary amusement, however, of the bull-fight, although at various times attempted, and even locally maintained, during a certain period and with certain modifications, to the present day, in France, never made any real way, or became elevated into an institution, although we read, among the archives of this reign, a circumstantial entry in the palace register, which leaves no doubt that unmitigated bull-fights did at that time take place, and that there must at one time have been a "*circo*" at Amboise, of which probably the gate now called "La Porte des Lions" is a relic.

The item in the royal expenditure, to which we allude stands thus:—

"(5 May, 1529). A Geoffroy Couldray, boucher, demourant à Amboise, la somme de 12 liv. 6 sols tournois pour son

payement d'un thoreau qu'il a baillé et amené de l'ordonnance du dict Seigneur, es logés des lyons qui sont au dict Amboise pour faire combattre le dict thoreau avec les dicts lyons pour le desduicts et passetemps du dict Seigneur."

Another charge debited to the king's account in this old register is that of "a considerable number of lions, tigers, vultures, and camels, brought from the kingdom of Fesc," to be exhibited at Amboise for the king's pleasure.

All, be it observed, that served for the "king's pleasure" was liberally remunerated, and, accordingly, we find various payments, or rather *largesses*, of "40 sols tournois," to people who presented a bouquet of choice flowers or a couple of ripe peaches to his majesty.

But we must not be tempted to wander away from matters exclusively connected with the château we are visiting, otherwise we might entertain our readers at great length with the details of these disbursements; we will content ourselves with observing, as regards them, that they afford considerable insight into the character of François, showing that, if lavish in his personal expenditure, he was not only just, but generous, in his donations: if he and his courtiers rode rough-shod over the cornfields, or destroyed the crops belonging to the peasantry, during their hunting excursions, the "droit du Seigneur" never served as a cover to meanness, but, on the contrary, the royal compensations were most liberal.

Whatever he did, he did in earnest, and we may remark that even after he reached the turning point of a premature old age —for François had been prodigal of his life as of all his other gifts—and after his high spirit was broken by the early loss of his children, the youngest of whom, Charles, had been the joy and delight of his life, we are surprised at the buoyancy with which he resumed his habits of activity, throwing himself, with

much of the vivacity of his youth, into those stirring pastimes which, while they formed a salutary diversion to his grief, contributed to maintain the brilliant reputation of his court; and, indeed, when we consider how largely François was endowed with personal advantages, we can scarcely wonder that he should have been led specially to promote such exercises as those in which he knew he must command universal admiration and outstrip all competition. Contemporary writers are unanimous in their laudations of his imposing presence—"car il estoit vraiment beau Prince, galant, affable, de belle grâce et majesté tant qu'un chacun se plaisoit à l'admyrer. Il estoit aussi très bon homme d'armes, et fort rude lance."

In company with his bewitching mistresses—Françoise de Foix, known to posterity as La Belle Ferronière, whose portrait we have all seen, but do not, perhaps, all admire—the yet more beautiful Anne de Pisseleu, whom he made Duchesse d'Etampes, and the fascinating Diane de Poitiers, who, in her old age, knew how to win and retain the young heart of a second monarch—François pursued his career of pleasure unchecked, but never neglecting for it the glory of his country, which grew and prospered and increased under his ubiquitous sway.

His personal magnificence was reflected in the habits, the practices, and the establishments of the nobles who surrounded him. The dress worn at court must have been gorgeous. We read of entertainments at Amboise where the garments worn by the lords and ladies of the royal suite were made of cloth of gold, embroidered with armorial bearings emblazoned in jewels. Priceless gems glittered on the *justaucorps* and on the *toque* of courtiers as well as king; here, elaborate ornaments of pearl; there, *rivières* of emeralds or of topazes; *torsades* of the finest gold enriched with brilliants, and above all this, the collar of their order, a *chef d'œuvre* of most elaborate design, in

filigree of gold studded with costly stones. Their horses, of flawless pedigree, were caparisoned in corresponding style, and covered, like their lords, with trellises of gold or mails of silk; their manes were platted with silk and gold, their coats were dressed and shone as if polished, and their riders wore elaborately damaskeened armour, while the costliness of household furniture and the luxury of the table were unrestricted by any considerations of expense—a very opposite policy from that which distinguished the considerate and abstemious Louis XII.

The domestic staff of the palace was served with a pomp scarcely second to that indulged in by the monarch himself, from the Connétable down to the maître d'hôtel; and even the "*Roi des ribauds*," or Prince of Fools, had his court.

The blast of the horn announces the hour of the chase; here come the huntsmen, the falconers, the master of the hounds, the whippers-in; the king is going out to ride; the squire advances to hold the royal stirrup. The court dines: see the traditional glory of the feudal pheasant served up with its gilded plumage, while behind the royal chair stands the "grand échanson," to whom is committed the silver-gilt ewer and basin for the king to wash his hands, and the amphora whence to pour out his wine into the "coupe de chevalerie." If the king requires a few golden crowns in his purse, the *argentier* must appear. For the service of his room, the chamberlain is appointed, and under him vice-chamberlains, pages, and serving-men—an endless train of courtiers, each of whom in his turn is surrounded by a retinue —the smaller sun of his own glittering system.

Notwithstanding the reckless expenditure of the court throughout François' magnificent reign, he left no debts to posterity, and a treasury containing a sum equivalent to about 6,000,000 francs, with a quarter's revenue due to the Crown.

While enumerating the royal attendants, we must give a place to Triboulet, the king's fool, for he was a native of Amboise, and in many respects superior to Brusquet, his contemporary and successor. Triboulet had spent his best years in the service of his patron and benefactor, good King Louis XII., though he retained much of his vigour for François, and did him good service on many occasions. He was a deformed little being, of whom the best that can be said, relatively to his external aspect, is, "Qu'il était très-bien fait—*pour un bossu!*"

Jean Marot, in his "Siège de Pescaire," thus draws the portrait of Triboulet :—

"De la tête écorné,
Aussi sage à trente ans que le jour qu'il fut né,
Petit front et gros yeux, nès grant, taille à vouste,
Estomac plat et long, hault dos à porter hotte;
Chacun contrefaisait, chanta, dansa, précha,
Et de tout si plaisant, qu'onc homme ne fâcha."

In all probability, Triboulet would have died in a ditch, and his wit and talent would have been lost to his regal employers, but for the penetration and the benevolence of Louis XII., who discerned what there was in him, and pitied his forlorn condition; once the butt of pages and the scorn of stable-boys, oppressed and derided because of his deformity, the sunshine of royal favour soon altered Triboulet's position, and he could now look with lofty contempt on the obsequious menials who had once kicked him. He played so conspicuous a part in the history of the court, and uttered so many severe truths under privilege of office, that kings have winced under his lash, and political events have revolved on their turning-point at his repartees. Triboulet died, however, and was buried. He departed this life and left his place at the king's side vacant in 1535. A Latin epitaph by Vulteius was inscribed on his grave, and that

merry tale came to its melancholy conclusion. Brusquet to a certain extent replaced him, but one man can never be what another was, though we may make him "do" instead; and Brusquet was a different kind of fool altogether. Brusquet, however, had no particular connection with Amboise, so we shall only add of him—because we had occasion to mention him at all—that he was of a somewhat heavy type, and as he had made his reputation at Avignon (where he originally practised as a physician) by administering horse-medicines to his patients, so he flourished as a court-fool by the ponderous verdicts with which (by fool's license) he overwhelmed his opponents. He compiled, with Gascon wit, the "Fool's Calendar," and thus secured to himself an opportunity of holding up, with every appearance of good-humour, to severe raillery, the names of any of the court on whom he was moved to pass censure. It was an invidious tribunal, and few wished to see themselves arraigned before it.

Among the hunting-parties which galloped through the forests at Amboise, perhaps no one individual was more distinguished than the young but astute Florentine princess, Catherine de Medicis, the king's new daughter-in-law, wife of Prince Henri, his now only surviving son and successor.

With the wonderful self-command she knew how to exercise —the deep secret of all the successes of her intriguing life— she had a smile for every one, and took no small pains to be specially obsequious to the king's mistresses, as well as to the king, and scarcely less so to the female favourites of her own husband.

Acting on this politic principle, she courted all the king's tastes and flattered his foibles, and seizing on his weak point —his love for the chase—was never known to miss a single hunting-party, adding in no small degree to the *éclat* of the

occasion, as well by her own dazzling presence as by the glittering train of beauty with which she surrounded herself.

Luxurious as was the life François led at Amboise, we must not forget that he was as *gal*lant as gal*lant*, and that numberless are the instances of a personal bravery which, though it may seem scarcely consistent with the life he occasionally passed in Sybaritic pleasures, was yet as distinguishing a characteristic of his nature as the love of gaiety and amusement which also marked his dashing and headlong career.

In battle he never failed to show himself conspicuously, wearing, like his Bourbon successor, a dazzling *panache blanc*, and specially seeking occasions to fight in single combat the most valiant of his adversaries. At the battle of Marignan—for we are not entitled to cite many examples here—that battle justly denominated, "La bataille des Géans," Brantôme tells us, "Qu'il s'y mesla si bien qu'il fut en grand danger, car sa buffe luy fut percée à jour, d'un coup de picque." At night, during his engagements, he shared the hardships of his commonest soldiers—"François et eux estoient logéz quasi pêle-mêle, et de fort grand matin vindrent à recommencer." On one occasion, "Le Roy coucha cette nuict sur le tymon d'une charrette, et le lendemain fut aussi frais et disposé a mener les mains comme auparavant, ainsi qu'il le fist bientost parroistre."

In 1539, Charles Quint having been apprised that "his Fayre Citie of Ghent" was in *émeute*, requested permission of François to allow him to pass through France that he might proceed to quell the rising revolt without delay. The splendour of the reception given to the great Emperor by the great King is well known, and François went out to Chatellerault with a numerous retinue to meet him. It was on this occasion —the French Court being then at Amboise—that, to the

best of our information, was constructed the sloping road within the tower which has been described above, though some state that it was the work of a clever architect under the orders of Charles VIII.

Among Charles Quint's caprices was a very pardonable objection to stairs, his royal host therefore, with characteristic courtesy, ordered that a road—and a royal road it was—should be forthwith made within the palace, so broad and so easy of ascent, that the imperial visitor might be driven up with Spanish pomp, preceded by his outriders in his massive coach-and-six.

François I. was one of those monarchs who, when he gave an order however unlooked for, expected to be answered—"Sire, si c'est possible, c'est fait, si c'est impossible, cela se fera." No sooner said, therefore, than done; and those who have seen this wonderful state-coach, which still exists, and stood not long since—a very patriarch of coaches—at the head of her Most Catholic ex-Majesty, Queen Isabella's collection of carriages, in the spacious stable-yard at Madrid, may form some notion of the feat then performed.

The splendour of the Court of François I. was dazzling in his capital, and it was scarcely less brilliant when he occupied his provincial palaces, and of his residences at Amboise, even when he had no visitors to astonish—"L'on y estoit," says Brantôme, "comme sy l'on fust esté dans Paris." What his habits were, may be imagined from the description given by this conscientious chronicler,—"On a parlé de Lucullus," says he, "mais jamais Lucullus n'approcha en rien de tout cela, à nostre Roy, ny en tous ses meubles n'eust jamais telles pièces que je viens dire, et, si possible, valloient plus que tous les siens. Quant à sa maison, jamais les ordinaires, ny salles, ny tables n'en approchèrent; car il y avait sa table, celle du grand maistre, du grand chambellan et chambellans, des gentils-

hommes de la chambre, des gentilshommes servans, des valets de chambre, et tant d'autres et très bien servies que rien ny manquait. Il estoit bien aisé," adds he with increased enthusiasm, "à Lucullus, de faire ses dépenses dans une bonne ville; mais aux champs tracassans, et tous les jours, dans des villages, dans des deserts et des boys, et porter tout un attirail de court, et la voir marcher comme nous l'avons veue, c'est une chose incroyable." On the occasion of Charles's visit, Brantôme gives us to understand, that although it was scarcely possible to go to a greater expense than when only "Lucullus supped with Lucullus," nevertheless, "Le Roy," he says "s'estudia à lui donner tous les esbattemens et plaisirs qu'il put, avec celui de la chasse"—for there were famous forests encircling Amboise. The magnificence of the French Court, he would have us believe, completely dazzled the Emperor, so much indeed, that he could hardly believe his senses.

One day, desirous of ascertaining whether all this show was put on for the occasion, and how matters went, behind the scenes, he sauntered unexpectedly into the great hall of Amboise, where the table of M. le Connétable was spread, and the company were about to seat themselves. He bade them take no notice of his presence, and only requested that they would make room for him as one of themselves. To his astonishment Charles found this repast served with the same care, taste, and luxury as the royal table itself; so that he afterwards told the Duke of Alba that there was no greatness in the world that could rival that of France.

As the guests consisted of high military officers and chevaliers of the most distinguished orders, and the Emperor had laid aside all ceremony, he was enjoying himself to the full in this congenial assembly, when François, who had been seeking his royal guest, found him seated at his Connétable's table and

thus discovered his manœuvre. He motioned to him not to disturb himself, and begged he would excuse anything that had not been to his mind in the ceremonial and preparations, as his visit had been without notice. Charles, however, rose and embraced his royal brother, assuring him that he had been delighted with the incident, and that if he had not witnessed and experienced the arrangements of the palace, and that, too, when the court was only *en camp volant*, he could not have believed they were so perfect.

Of the magnificent reception François gave him when he proceeded to Paris, painters and historians have given us glowing descriptions, but their place is not here. Nothing could be more honourable than François' forbearance during this venturesome passage through the country of a former enemy, for Charles was virtually in his power, whilst his own former treacherous conduct towards the king scarcely entitled him to the protection due from the laws of hospitality; nevertheless, Charles's person was perfectly secure, and the utmost that François permitted himself was to remind him on one occasion of what he *might* do if he pleased.

"Sire," said he one day, pointing to a lady then in great favour—the Duchesse d'Etampes: "there, is a counsellor who advises me to offer you my hospitality until your Majesty shall have revoked the treaty of Madrid."

"If you consider the advice good," replied Charles, somewhat disconcerted, "your Majesty must follow it."

Having, however, accepted a banquet given by the duchess a few days after, on her presenting him with the silver basin in which he was to wash his hands, he adroitly let fall into the water a diamond ring of great value which he wore. The fair servitress was on the point of restoring the gem, but Charles gallantly assured her he could not think of taking from so

beautiful a hand a jewel so well calculated to adorn it, and thus purchased her good will. However, Charles was not capable of appreciating the motives to which he owed his safety; and when one of his courtiers, warning him of the risk he ran, observed that if the French did not take advantage of the circumstance, they were either "bien foibles ou bien aveugles," "Ils sont l'un et l'autre," replied the wily Emperor, "et c'est sur cela que je me fie." He ought to have said—"They are generous, and it is that which inspires me with confidence."

Triboulet, the court-jester, having written upon his *tablettes* that when Charles Quint passed through France he should resign his office, as there would then be a greater fool at Court than himself, François asked him what he would say if Charles passed through the country in safety? "Sire," replied Triboulet, "I should still resign at once; only, in favour of your Majesty, instead." This remark was reported to Charles, who found it exceedingly sensible.

Notwithstanding the magnificent festivities of which Charles's presence was the occasion, and the generosity of which he was the object, it was very plain that he was not at his ease. Naturally designing and suspicious, he could not believe that François would not take advantage of so rare an opportunity as his visit afforded. He recollected his own narrow and rigid policy when François had been in his power, and he felt he deserved a retribution, such as he himself would have been quite incapable of withholding. Among other entertainments a grand ball was given at Amboise, which of course went off with extreme *éclat*, but at its conclusion an alarm of fire suddenly arose, and although it proved no more than an alarm, Charles made up his mind that the hour of vengeance, for which he was ever on the look-out, was come, and that the fire was a pretext to make away with him. On another occasion,

when riding past the castle wall, a heavy piece of timber fell from the ramparts across the road just as he had passed the spot. He saw in this accident the elements of another conspiracy, and so sensitive was he on this point that he could not bear the slightest joke on the subject, nor tolerate any allusion to it. One day, when proceeding mounted, through the forest at Amboise, he was suddenly startled from his royal propriety by the clutch of an armed knight, who leapt on to his horse, and surrounding him with his steel-clad arms, suddenly whispered in his ear—"Sire, je vous fais mon prisonnier."

On turning quickly round, the emperor's alarm was considerably relieved at perceiving the laughing eyes of one of the boy-princes, the frolicsome Charles d'Orléans, who had most innocently played off this little joke upon him. Doubtless the child's mind was still impressed with the recollection of his Spanish captivity when hostage for his royal father. Charles smiled, but it was a ghastly smile, and he did not readily recover his equanimity, while there remained a certain uneasiness in his manner, even when affecting to be amused at the child's *espièglerie:* Charles does not impress one with the idea that he could have been partial to children, and no doubt he thought this one an "enfant terrible!" In short, it is evident he never felt safe till he had crossed the frontier; and once there, withdrew all his promises and became more exacting than ever; but even then François was too noble to regret the generosity he had shown him.

In 1521, after the meeting of François I. and Henry VIII. on the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the French king returned to Amboise, and there, took place an incident curiously suggestive of the frivolous tone of the time.

It was Twelfth Day, and the king hearing that M. de Sainct Pol had in his house a "Roy de la febve," that is, a king who

had drawn the bean in the cake, sent word that he was coming to besiege him, whereon M. de Sainct Pol made a great provision of ammunition, supplying himself with snow-balls, apples, and eggs, to sustain the assault—all defensive weapons for those within; those without, were to do their best to approach the gates and force them. In the midst of the excitement some foolish practical joker, not satisfied with following the stipulated rules of the game, fetched a heavy beam, which he incautiously threw from an upper window, so that unhappily it fell on the king's head. The king was seriously wounded, and it was some days before the surgeons could pronounce an opinion on the possible results; meantime, the report went abroad, first, that the king was dangerously wounded, then, that he was blinded, and finally, that he was dead, and great consternation followed. The king ordered the fact of his convalescence to be made public, and generously forbore to inquire who had committed this folly, forbidding any investigation of the matter.

But François' career was drawing to an early close. He had lived a rapid but eventful life: measured by incidents, it had been comparatively protracted—computed by years, he was in the very climax of his age, though he succumbed to a complete prostration of his forces.

During a life of fifty-two years and a reign of thirty-three, he had exhausted all that it is given to man to enjoy, and perhaps one of the most melancholy spectacles it ever fell to those old grey walls of Amboise to witness, was the last feverish visit of its once gay, noble, brilliant, and vigorous master.

Sick and restless, and almost apprehending the hopelessness of his condition, he could no longer tolerate the burden of his life, and forgetting that the cause of his distaste and disquietude was in himself, and not in the locality he inhabited, he resorted with fitful dissatisfaction to one place after another, vainly seeking

ease and finding none: whithersoever he went, he dragged with him that merciless chain from which no power could now sever him.

Arrived at Amboise, he ordered Ambroise Paré to be called to him—Ambroise Paré, the man of science *par excellence*, and the herald of that dawning period in the mediæval history of surgical knowledge which he ushered in with all the power of his brilliant intelligence.

Ambroise Paré had performed operations which, in that day—not to say in our own—might have been regarded as miracles of judgment and of skill. What other hand besides that of this prince of surgeons could have drawn, out of the face of the Duc de Guise, a spear-point broken off after penetrating two inches deep between the socket of the eye and the bridge of the nose! This was the man who had accomplished that feat, and afterwards healed the wound, so that it is doubtful whether it was for the greater glory of the surgeon or of the patient that he survived to distinguish himself under the name of "Le Balafré."

Alas! he—even he—was powerless to serve, or even to reassure, the king. All that he could do here was to confirm the dying monarch's own preconceived suspicion of his desperate state, and to warn him that the throne and all its glories, of which he had so long been the possessor, together with all his responsibilities and all his opportunities, were gliding away from him before his very eyes.

The world, thenceforth, began to assume, in the king's sight, a new aspect. Youth, beauty, hope, all that makes the present enjoyable by showing us the brightness of the future, had now eluded the grasp of the once conquering and triumphant monarch, who had never yet known any will but his own. He suddenly discovered, for the first time, that there was an

inexorable law to which even he must submit, and that "circumstance, that unspiritual god," must be obeyed, for all around him had "turned to dust!"

As the king's haggard eye, looking from his ponderous couch, or gazing from the turret-windows of the château, rested on those noble avenues through which, attended by the most dazzling of courts, he had so often led the giddy chase, and felt himself the proudest monarch of the world, he fell back aghast at the thought that for him all these pageants of his youthful days were over, and his place should know him no more. He turned away, but it was only to read the same story written on other scenes and told in other words. All was growing old around him—the future had come at last to be the present, and there was nothing beyond it! nothing but what he shuddered to contemplate, the ghastly realities of the grave!

His sister, the beautiful and adored Marguerite de Navarre, once the supremest joy of his life, and to whose caprices he had more than once sacrificed the interests of his kingdom, was fast accompanying his own steps, and her tears of repentance were falling upon the pages of the "*Miroir de l'âme pécheresse,*" which her pen now traced, in place of the wild and seductive "Heptameron," so often a source of mirth and revelry to both. His very mistresses, "those laughing dames in whom he took delight," had become distasteful to him, and their altered mien, now that they had to bear with the distempered fancies of a fractious and prematurely superannuated invalid, formed a suggestive contrast to the winning faces they wore, as petted minions, when their smiles were seen through the *réseaux* of gold and diamonds with which they were purchased.

The king's passion for embellishing the buildings of his period was the only one which yet survived in the heart of that *blasé* monarch, and to the very last he continued to confer

with artists and architects—designing improvements and consulting with them as to the best way of carrying them out.

At the close of the year 1546, François, utterly broken down in mind and body, quitted Amboise for the last time, and yielding to the fevered delusion of an enfeebled intellect, hurried from palace to palace, so that within a few months he was successively at Fontainebleau, Moulins, Romorrantin, Chanteloup, St. Germain, Arques, Blois, Chambord, Anêt, Chenonceau, Dampierre, La Muette, and Villepreaux; for within that period we meet with edicts dated from all these places. We next find him at Limours, and then at Loches, whence, on his way to St. Germain, a sudden fancy seized him to halt at Rambouillet, and there it was that this pitiable state came to its sad close. But the details of his singular death—very much in harmony with his not less singular life—belong to another page.

Meantime, the old walls of Amboise stood by to witness another and another generation of kings enter, play their part, and pass away.

During the following reign—that of Henri II.—Amboise continued, more or less permanently, to serve as the residence of the court; and beneath the shade of its venerable forest, sported, as they ripened into manhood and womanhood, those youthful scions of the house of Valois, of whom Nostradamus is said to have predicted that each of those young brows was one day to sustain the weight of a crown. Possibly the prediction was made after the event; but whether or not, such was the fact, and a strange one it is in the *bizarre* annals of history: not so strange, however, but that one stranger still was connected with it. Of those four brothers and two sisters, who all came to be kings and queens, not one descendant survived in the next generation to inherit the throne that any of them had occupied!

Of these children of a royal line, the three elder brothers, François, Charles, and Henri, were successively kings of France —Henri having been likewise king of Poland, and the fourth, Hercule (but after his eldest brother's death called François— Duc d'Alençon), was elected Duke of Brabant, with a power equivalent to that of a king. The eldest daughter, Elizabeth, married Philip II., and became Queen of Spain; and the second, Marguerite, was wife of Henri, King of Navarre, afterwards Henri IV. of France, when he divorced Marguerite to marry Marie de Medicis. This marriage appears to have been decided on in very early times. We find a pretty little passage in Palma Cayet's "Chronologie Novenaire," relating that when Henri II. visited Anthoine de Bourbon, Roy de Navarre, at the Château de Pau, "arriva dans la chambre le petit Prince de Navarre. Sitôt que le roy Henri l'eut veu si esveillé et si gentil, il le print dans ses bras et le baisa, puis luy demanda: 'Voulez-vouz être mon fils?' Mays le petit prince luy respondit—'Ed que-es lo pay,' ce qui signifie 'C'est celuy-là qui est mon père.' Le Roy Très Chrestien prenant plaisir à la naïveté de sa response, luy demanda encores: 'Eh bien, voulez-vous être mon gendre?' Le petit prince regarda son père, et puis luy respondit—'O bé' (oui bien). Depuis aussi les deux Roys se promirent que leurs enfans venus en âge, ledict sieur Prince espouserait Madame Marguerite de France, plus aagée que luy d'environ six mois."

In the "Autobiographical Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois" —a most curious, valuable, and interesting document—we find the record of the sojourn made at Amboise by herself and her younger brother d'Alençon, who were sent thither in 1561, "*à cause de notre petitesse,*" and remained there until 1564.

"Walking in beauty" among this royal bevy was to be distinguished the lovely little Mary Stuart, the infant Queen of

Scotland, whose fascinations rendered her the pet of the French Court, whither she had been sent to be brought up. Scarcely verging on womanhood, the interest of her position was still further enhanced by her becoming Dauphiness of France and bride of François, the eldest of her playmates—himself but fifteen years of age!

But a yet higher distinction was at hand, and in an unlooked-for and untoward moment, ere three lustres had passed over her innocent head, Mary Stuart found it already burdened with the weight of two crowns.

It was the wedding day of the Princesse Elizabeth, the eldest of the "filles de France." Great were the rejoicings and great the festivities on the auspicious occasion; for, although Elizabeth's heart was not in that marriage, it was a grand political event, and the occasion of a nation's joy. None anticipated the tragic occurrence with which that ill-assorted union was ushered in—a fitting presage truly was it, nevertheless, of the gloomy sequel. Queen Catherine, whose gift of second sight had long led her to suspect the coming fatality, alone apprehended some evil amid the gay and festive sports which celebrated the royal espousals. A dream she had had the previous night had made her doubly anxious, and after in vain entreating the king to take no part in the games and contests, she stood by, a trembling spectator of each feat, in which he nevertheless came off victorious. At length the day was nearly over, the jousts were all concluded, and Catherine, feeling as if a heavy load were removed from her heart, began to breathe once more. What, however, was her dismay when, after seeing the king leave the lists, she learned that his majesty was going to break another lance with a masked knight whose challenge he had accepted. Distracted with terror, and feeling that there was no escape from the fearful destiny which had been pre-

dicted to her, Catherine sent the most urgent messages to Henri, beseeching him to forbear and withdraw at once. But, alas! her entreaties were of no avail. Henri seemed, as if impelled by some supernatural agency, determined to rush upon his fate. The queen withdrew from her balcony. She knew now that his doom was sealed, and she could not bear to be a spectator of the scene. She declared her conviction of the fact to the young princes, and awaited with calmness the blow she had in vain essayed to avert. It was not long in striking her; and the frantic cry which soon rent the air—"The king is unhorsed!"—fell upon her ear like the death-knell which she knew must inevitably follow it. The lance of Montgomery —the masked knight with whom the king had insisted on tilting—had entered his eye. The wound was mortal; and a few short days after, Catherine was no more than Queen-Dowager, and François II. and Mary Stuart were proclaimed King and Queen of France. The details of this incident and its consequences belong to another chapter.

On their accession to the throne, the Château d'Amboise was the place first selected by the youthful pair as their residence.

Poor children! they had already exhausted their happiest days, and the brightness of life was even now to them a thing of the past—of that brief past which happily they were unconscious was to them the precursor of so much misery. During nearly the whole of his short but troubled reign, François' health was such as to neutralise all enjoyment; and though he had a wonderful appreciation of his position and duties, he lacked the energy to carry out such measures as he saw should be taken. His life, from that time, may be said to have been but a long death-struggle; and so singular was the nature of his complaint, that it was whispered everywhere the young king was slowly falling a victim to the ambitious machinations

of the Guises, while by many, his own mother was supposed to be the instigator of the diabolical project. The poor little queen could only watch her boy-husband, pray for him and with him, and console him with her innocent caresses; and if those old walls of Amboise Castle could but speak, woeful would be the history of joyless days and wakeful nights passed in supplication and tears at that hopeless bedside.

During the intervals of comparative health enjoyed by François, some of the pastimes and amusements of the age enlivened the court. These were not of a particularly elevated character, but it suited the Guises to maintain, as long as they could, the simplicity of the king's mind.

Brantôme supplies a curious account of a "courement de bagne" which took place at Amboise for the entertainment of François II., when M. le Grand-prieur (one of the Guises) took part in the proceedings, contending ten times in succession with M. de Nemours, "who was one of the best horsemen in France." In the eleventh contest, M. le Grand-prieur was victorious. "He rode a barb," says the old chronicler, "and was tastefully attired in the costume of a gipsy woman, except that his dress was of velvet and other costly materials, and on his left arm, instead of an infant, he carried a small monkey, swaddled like a little child, which made the most singular grimaces, and set all the company a-laughing; but at last it became so troublesome to manage, the horse being a very spirited one, that he was obliged, after the fourth run, to dispose of the monkey, but he continued masked. . . . . M. de Nemours was dressed *en bourgeoise*, with a hood and dress of black cloth, and wore at his waist a large housekeeper's purse, with a huge bunch of more than a hundred keys, he also being masked. He entered the lists mounted on a remarkably fine sorrel horse named Réal, whom Le Seigneur

Jules, squire to M. de Vidasme, and M. de Nemours himself, had trained to go at two steps and a leap; which feat it seems he executed 'mieux que ne fit jamais cheval, et qui alloit le plus haut.' In short," adds the narrator, "en cette allée du milieu du jardin d'Amboise, il ne fit que cinq saultz, tant il se lançoit bien, M. de Nemours s'y tenant sy bien, et de sy bonne grâce, qu'il en donna admiration à tout le monde, tant hommes que dames." Then comes in a little bit of chivalry, indicative of the spirit of the times: "Or il y avait là une dame qu'il servait et aimait fort, aussi elle, luy. Et ce qu'y estoit plaisant," he continues, "c'estoit que le clavier avec la multitude des clefs faisait un bruict comme sy ce fussent estés des sonnettes, pour les saultz du roussin qui en même tems que luy, sauttoit en l'ayr et tintinoient ainsy." This is the testimony of an eye-witness, and thus these little details have their value. "Je vis tout cela, et ce fut la première fois que je vins à la Court, venant d'Italye."

An anecdote which follows this recital, "à propos de ce cheval Réal," is interesting as an evidence of the class of diversions which sufficed to entertain those of the highest rank in the sixteenth century. About two years before Réal appeared in the games at Amboise, King Henri (the father of François II.), on Shrove Tuesday, took it into his head to go masked, with the young princes, lords, and gentlemen of his court, through the city of Paris; and it was which should commit most follies. They all came to the Palais de Justice; M. de Nemours riding Réal, started off, and up the steps of the grand entrance—"cas estrange," quaintly observes Brantôme, "estant sy précipitant"—galloped along the gallery and the great hall, round which he capered in all sorts of paces, and then descending by the staircase of the Sainte Chapelle, without once stumbling, brought his master back, sound in ribs and limbs, into the

court. Several others of the party then went in and came out again, but by the smaller entrance, neither did they venture on to the stairs—"Mais ce traist de M. de Nemours,' he concludes, "fut estrange et miraculeux tenu et conduict par la main de Dieu; s'y que jamais ne se vist tel miracle."

Pierre de Ronsard, son of François I.'s maître d'hôtel, born at the Château de Poissonnière, near Vendôme, became foremost at this time in the cultivation of letters and the improvement of the French language. From the year 1524 to 1585, his efforts and his writings were directed towards the reformation of literature, then so much needed, and, crude as his own productions may now appear, he certainly deserves to be regarded as one of the principal founders of the new era which followed his times.

Before his time, poetry had been regarded as light literature of the lightest kind, so that those who indulged in metrical writing had almost exclusively confined themselves to effusions of the most frivolous and trifling nature, such as epigrams, rondos, sonnets, and ballads—which, though not without a certain elegance, yet excluded all that grandeur of thought and nobleness of expression attained in the antique, and as the classical type had been successfully adopted in art and architecture, so it now became, in literature also, the source of a new and admired style.

Ronsard was an inmate of the Court of Amboise, and if a favourite with all the royal brothers, he was doubly so with the king himself, while his long sojourn with James V. of Scotland, father of Mary Stuart, augmented that princess's attachment for him. All France contributed to spoil Ronsard, who, probably, in later times, would have taken a very different place in public estimation. The *savants* surnamed him Homer and Virgil, while the literary association of Toulouse, known

as "l'Académie des jeux floraux," presented him with a statuette of Minerva in solid silver. This testimonial was, with a graceful compliment, transferred by Ronsard to the king. Queen Elizabeth, to whom, when in Scotland, he had addressed some flattering verses, rewarded him with a valuable diamond; and Mary Stuart, then Queen of France, presented him with a piece of plate, designed by herself, and executed in solid silver. It represented Mount Parnassus with Pegasus on the summit, while beneath was the complimentary inscription—

"A Ronsard,
L'Appollon de la source des Muses."

How could a poet who received so much adulation from the great, entertain any other than an exalted opinion of his own merit? And can we be surprised at the vanity which induced him to remark, that he was born in the year in which François I. was defeated at Pavia—"comme si le ciel avait voulu dédommager la France de ses pertes!" Melin de Saint Gelais, the severest of his critics, allows him some genius, but always took advantage of a personal encounter to taunt him. Ronsard's dread of coming into collision with Rabelais is positively amusing. He always took care to ascertain whither the jovial Curé de Meudon was going, that he might make sure of avoiding him. However, Voltaire was not less afraid of Pirou; a meeting was literally to him the "Quart d'heure de Rabelais."

Such, then, were the *délassements* of the young couple in the tranquil seclusion of Amboise. These innocent pleasures, however, represent but the stray beams of sunshine which illumine the early morning of a winter's day; they flicker delusively across the pathway, and—are gone! Family feuds, the ambitious struggles of others, and political contests of which they were the guiltless victims, darkened their youthful days,

and poisoned the peace of their harmless lives. In the midst of cares and anxieties already too heavy for such young hearts, instead of consolation, and promise of brighter times, came upon them new difficulties and trials, which culminated in the daring conspiracy of Amboise, dragging them with irresistible force into the midst of its sanguinary consequences.

In the spring of 1560 the Guises, in order to amuse the king and prevent his dwelling too much on affairs of state, which they preferred keeping in their own hands, brought him with his young bride to Blois, and it was while in this comparatively defenceless abode that the conspirators thought the opportunity come for carrying out their project. Their scheme was to obtain possession of the king's person, and withdraw him from the domination of the Guise faction; and the chief who directed their movements, and, indeed, one of the principal instigators of the plot, was Jean Burri La Renaudie, Sieur de Laforêt, a man who had tarnished his character by forgery and other crimes, and who, having lost his position, had thrown himself with vehemence into the Calvinistic interests, contriving to lead after him not fewer than 1,200 of the Huguenot party.

The Duke and Cardinal de Guise, whose spies were always actively at work, got wind of the storm that was brewing, and gained information of the intended movement from a lawyer named Avenelles, with whom La Renaudie was lodging, and who was a pretended friend of the cause.

The Guises, alarmed at the precipice they saw suddenly yawning beneath their feet—the magnitude of which they had never suspected—felt that they were still comparatively in the dark as to what might be going on. They began to doubt every one, and no longer recognising friend from foe, trembled before imaginary terrors, whilst much of the real danger remained as yet undetected.

While pursuing, with increased activity, their researches as to the extent and origin of the coming revolt, the Guises lost no time in removing the king and queen to Amboise, and put into operation all the defences of the fortress-palace.

The simple-minded young king, whose confidence in his uncle was still considerable, was at a loss to understand what could be the cause of the alarm and excitement he heard whispered about him; but, although he was only allowed to know as much as his wily relatives thought fit, he began to suspect the truth, and being of a straightforward character, and further, his good sense telling him that there could be no animosity against himself, he said to the duke, "Qu'ai-je fait à mon peuple, qui m'en veut ainsi? Je veux entendre ses doléances et lui faire raison. Je ne sais, mais j'entends, que c'est à vous et au Cardinal qu'on en veut. Je desirerois que vous fussiez hors d'ici pour voir si c'est bien à vous ou à moi qu'on en veut."

But the admission of this test by no means suited the policy of MM. les Guises; on the contrary, the duke took advantage of the confusion to confirm his power by obtaining the new dignity of lieutenant-general of the kingdom, and to establish himself more firmly than ever.

Meantime the conspirators, who felt so secure that they took no alarm at the change of residence of the court, proceeded to carry out the plans they had decided on at Nantes, merely altering the place of rendezvous and the day of the attack. They took the precaution of dividing their body into small detachments, with the view of disarming suspicion, and thus, by degrees, made their way to Amboise. This expedient, however, was destined to prove fatal to their projects. The Guises were now prepared, and as each small band arrived, they were at once, and without difficulty, overcome and taken prisoners, or slaughtered on the spot if they resisted. At

length, La Renaudie learned the fate of his men, and, exasperated to desperation, rashly resolved to start, himself, with the wreck of his force and storm the castle. He was in the act of crossing the forest of Château-Renaud when he met the young Count of Pardaillan, his cousin. This young man was one of the opposite party, and, without any hesitation, rushed on his kinsman with a loaded pistol pointed at him. La Renaudie leapt from his horse and overcame Pardaillan, dealing him two blows with his sword, but a page of the latter's, who was in attendance on his master, and who saw the deadly struggle, aimed at him with his cross-bow, and laid him dead as he was in the act of inflicting a third, and probably fatal, blow. The corpse of La Renaudie was seized by the victors and carried in triumph to Amboise, where it was hung up on a gibbet erected on the bridge for that purpose, the following inscription being attached to it—"La Renaudie dict Laforêt, chef des rebelles."

The Baron de Castelnau Chalosse, seeing that all was lost, surrendered to the Duc de Nemours on his parole, that his life should be spared; but after his imprisonment, when brought to trial, judgment was given against him, and he was sentenced to die notwithstanding this promise. The duke, who felt the dishonour of breaking his word, exerted himself to the utmost to reverse this decree, but the counterplea was, that for a crime of *lèse-majesté* as this was represented to be, no subject had any power to make such a condition, and that therefore it was null and void. The brave young baron, who had shown the greatest patience and candour during the interrogatory, was executed by the headsman—without pity for his youth or his courage, close to the very spot where, not many years before, his brother had given his life, a willing sacrifice for that of the Duc d'Orléans, son of François I., in the quarrel created by that prince's own rashness.

While the unfortunate La Renaudie was the visible chief of this desperate attempt, the Prince de Condé was secretly its head and leader, and although, partly by good fortune and partly owing to the forbearance of both parties, he managed to evade the penalties which fell so heavily on the rest, none entertained any doubt of his complicity. Had the attempt succeeded, probably he would not have objected to share in the glory.

This affair exhibits a phase of his character which all will despise, and clouds whatever other moral excellence he possessed. Brantôme describes him as diminutive in size, with a disproportionately large head, and slightly *bossu*, but says he was a brave fellow, "et aussy fort, aussy verd, et vigoureux et adroit aux armes, à pied et à cheval, autant que homme de France." He was also sparkling in conversation, and so fond of a joke "que fust faict de luy une chanson qui disait:—

> "Ce petit homme tant joly
> Tousjours cause et tousjours rit,
> Et tousjours baise sa mignonne:
> Dieu garde de mal le petit homme."

After the Amboise affair he deservedly obtained the *sobriquet* of *Le Capitaine muet*. Some say he was elected chief by these Huguenot confederates without his consent or knowledge; others that he gave his countenance to the plot, but on condition he should not be brought forward in case of failure: but le Sieur de Maligny, a brave and valiant gentleman and of a noble house, who was very intimate with the Prince, and was with him at Amboise at the time of the plot, was so apprehensive of the consequences of its discovery that, as soon it became matter of discussion, without committing himself by a single observation, he went straight to the stable, took the fleetest horse he could find, and mounting it without preamble, escaped from the castle. He pursued his way to Geneva, whence he never

returned. Some little time after, while bathing in the lake, he got entangled in a sandbank and was drowned. Had he survived, possibly his evidence might have proved fatal to the Prince, who very narrowly escaped implication as it was: he was actually in durance vile under suspicion, when the death of François II. caused a favourable change in his circumstances, and he obtained his release from the new government.

But to conclude our account of this famous conspiracy. The vengeance practised by the Guises on the misguided Huguenots was savage even for that savage period; those who were not already put to death were dragged forth from the dungeons of Amboise into which they had been thrown, and were butchered in cold blood on the terrace before the windows of the castle. Nor was this all, their mutilated bodies were hung round the wall on every available spot. Not one escaped, and the extent of this bloody massacre may be conceived, if the assertion be true, that the executioner, wearied with this carnage, refused to go on, and the remaining culprits were then ordered to be thrown into the river.

"That," said the old man who was showing us the castle, pointing to the stone balcony below, "that is the spot which streamed with the blood of these hapless victims, and this bay-windowed room in which we stand, formed the royal box on the occasion. The window was thrown open and hung with crimson velvet, and here sat the court to view the revolting spectacle. Catherine herself not only had desired to be present, but she insisted that the young king and Mary Stuart should assist at the execution. The little queen, who could not endure the sight, but was at first awed by the queen-mother, who fixed her eyes upon her with a terrible frown, at length burst through all restraint, and throwing herself at her uncle's feet, entreated he would give orders that the work of butchery

should be arrested; but he met her supplications, to which were now added those of the king, with contempt, and told them they knew not how to reign if they could not see the necessity of administering justice. Finding her prayers ineffectual, the queen twice swooned, and was twice compelled by the queen-mother to resume her position. At last the king interfered and she was carried away, he availing himself gladly of the excuse to follow her."

Some historians have asserted, but with what truth it is impossible to say, that a few days after this barbarous carnage the atmosphere at and around Amboise became so pestilential that the court could no longer inhabit the palace, and was forced to remove thence to Blois, while a disease broke out among those who remained, which decimated the population and raised still bitterer feelings against the Guises.

De Castelnau's version of this affair is altogether different, and stands thus:—After the execution of La Renaudie, and the exposure of his body on the bridge, "Le Baron de Castelnau," his brother, he says, "se rendit au Duc de Nemours sur la parolle qu'il luy donna de luy sauver la vie, voyant qu'il ne pouvait se sauver ny resister et monstra beaucoup de constance et de résolution, tant à respondre aux interrogatoires qui luy furent faits qu'à se disposer de mourir, estant hors d'espérance de miséricorde. Il y en eut beaucoup d'autres pris et pendus pour servir d'exemple en cas si nouveau, et en fust attaché quelque nombre aux creneaux du chasteau, pour estonner les autres; plusieurs furent aussy desvalisez par les chemins, tant par les peuples que par les courtisans. De sorte qu'en moins de quatre ou cinq jours les conjurez et leurs adhérans qui estoient à la cour, et qui n'osoient dire mot, se trouverent bien loin de leur compte. Il est certain que la Rayne mère du Roi qui se vouloit faire cognoistre princesse pleine de miséricorde et

bonté, adoucit beaucoup d'autres exécutions que se devoient faire contre les conjuréz desquels Sa Majesté en fit delivrer et renvoyer grand nombre; et aussi l'on fit une abolition générale, afin que ceux qui n'estoient encore venus cogneussent la douceur et bonté du Roy envers eux, combien que par les chemins nonobstant ladite abolition, il y en eut encore plusieurs pris, tuez, noyez ou executez."

The young king, whose constitution had always been weakly, and of late had continued to fail rapidly, never recovered from this shock. Amboise, where they had hoped to be so happy, had become henceforth intolerable to the royal pair, and they retired for a time to Orleans: but it was to be the closing scene of their brief and clouded wedded life. Here the king's indisposition increasing, the physicians who attended him, including Ambroise Paré himself, saw it was useless to dissemble any longer, and declared the malady beyond their skill. Dark rumours floated about which implicated the queen-mother very deeply in the causes of the king's strange and unfathomable malady, and while some said that the Duke of Guise had poured a deadly poison into his ear while he slept, others averred that the queen-mother kept watch over his sick bed, and used her utmost endeavours to prevent the only physician worthy of the name, Ambroise Paré, for whom Mary Stuart had sent in despair, from approaching the dying boy. Be the cause what it might, François expired on the 5th December, 1560, leaving his royal widow inconsolable for his loss, in the midst of enemies, and a victim to troubles of which this was but the precursor.

Pierre de l'Estoile sums up the narrative of François' death with a curious and insinuating remark—"Comme le coup d'œil de son père," says he, alluding to the accident at the tournament which deprived Henry II. of life, "avait ouvert les yeux

à plusieurs, ainsi le coup d'oreille de cesluy-cy, fit baisser les oreilles à beaucoup de gens."

The *beaux-esprits* of the time were never tired of exercising their wit upon this occurrence, and when, in 1562, Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre, died, as was supposed, of a wound on the shoulder from a fall off his horse, the following verses, including allusions to the three mysterious deaths, were circulated :—

"Par l'œil, par l'espaule et l'oreille,
Dieu a fait en France merveille ;
Par l'oreille, l'espaule et l'œil,
Dieu a mis trois roys au cercueil,
Et par l'œil, l'oreille et l'espaule
Dieu a tué trois roys en Gaule—
Antoine, François, et Henri,
Qui de luy n'ont pas à soucy."

It is a curious fact, and one which it required some of the petty ingenuity of the time to discover, that François II., who died at the age of 17, had reigned 17 months, 17 days, and 17 hours, and that the figures which express the date of his death, added together amount to 17 (5th Dec., 1560). The king's obsequies were so disrespectfully arranged, and so meanly carried out, that great disgust was manifested thereat by the people, and on the pall which covered the coffin was found a somewhat severe pasquinade, consisting of this short but cutting exclamation—"Tanneguay du Châtel, où es-tu ?" alluding to the munificence with which that nobleman had defrayed the expenses of Charles VII.'s funeral from his own private purse. The Guises had it all their own way during the reign of this child, who, with the best dispositions, was a mere tool in their hands. "Roi sans vice," no doubt he was, but his early death, and diseased condition during his reign, leave us no opportunity of judging what he might have been.

Perhaps no king ever reigned under more inauspicious circumstances, and never was there a greater want of a wise head to direct the reins of government and meet the machinations of those party-factions, all contending to establish the private ends of intriguing individuals. Voltaire's portrait of François is not far from the truth:—

"Foible enfant, qui de Guise adorait les caprices,
Et dont on ignorait les vertus et les vices."

A contemporary writer has left the following lines upon the death of this unhappy young king, which have been transmitted to us by De Castelnau:—

"Je n'eus regnant, un seul jour de plaisence,
Et, comme on vit peu, de poison,
Ainsy d'ennui, de soin et de soupçon,
Se nourrissaient la fleur de ma jouvence;
Si qu'eux suçant son humeur nourrissante,
L'ont faict dépeoir déjà toute languissante."

They contain their testimony as to what the popular rumour of the time must have been.

That Amboise was used principally as a state prison during the reign of Henri III., we have ample evidence; and one anecdote which we quote serves to show that, even under this employment, it retained the comforts of its former destination. It seems that in 1587 the "Faction des Seize" made vigorous attempts to get up a feeling of disaffection to the king, affirming that his majesty was gradually establishing a tyrannical government, and prevented the preachers from enlightening the people on the oppression by which they would soon find themselves overcome. They went so far as to accuse him of arresting and secretly putting to death such of their number as spoke plainly from the pulpit, and Boucher, one of the

doctors of the Sorbonne, publicly affirmed that one Hugues Burlart, a doctor of divinity, and "théologal d'Orléans," had been made away with by the king's orders. Henri, finding it necessary to put a stop to these calumnies, for he had quite enough to answer for, without them, sent for Boucher, and asked him why he had made this unfounded statement. Boucher, much disconcerted, replied that he had it on hearsay. Then the king asked him how he came to be so ready to believe a falsehood, and so far to forget his holy calling as to preach from the pulpit of truth, false accusations of a fellow-man, who was also his king. "Boucher, at this reproach," says Palma Cayet, "remained as if dumb, on which the king 'fit soulever une portière'"—for the doorways were all masked with tapestry in those days—"'et fit parroître le dit théologal, savoir Hugues Burlart, se portant à merveille, l'ayant faict fort bien traicter dans un apartement au chasteau d'Amboise.' The king," he adds, "was fully justified in confining Burlart, 'pour avoir, lui aussi, presché une infinité de menteries aussi claires que ceste-cy.'" Cayet lauds Henri's clemency on this occasion, observing that whereas any other king would have severely visited such an offence, he contented himself with begging the Bishop of Paris to suspend him for a certain time.

During the reign of Louis XV. the Duc de Choiseul-Stainville, prime minister of that monarch, whose influence was so great that he gained the sobriquet of "Le Roi Choiseul," obtained possession of this princely domain, and in 1764 got it "érigé en duché-pairie;" the power, however, of this minister, was of short duration, and his disgrace was in a great measure owing to the disastrous issue of the seven years' war, which was conducted—or rather misconducted—by him. The King of Prussia was wont to call him "Le cocher de l'Europe," and he

continued to command considerable awe even after he had resigned his office. The changes he made at Amboise have already been mentioned in our introduction.

In 1793 Amboise was taken possession of by the National Assembly, in whose hands it fell into a state of dilapidation; but at the Restoration it came into the heritage of Louis Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, as part of the succession of the Duc de Penthièvre. As Duke of Orleans, Louis Philippe repaired Amboise, and put it into habitable order, frequently resorting thither with his family, and when he became king he went to considerable expense in restoring it, but never resided there.

The last historic scene which has illustrated the annals of the Château d'Amboise—not inferior, perhaps, in picturesque detail and general interest to those which had preceded it—was the sojourn of the illustrious Emir Abd-el-Kader, taken prisoner by General Lamoricière, in 1847, after ten years of hostilities. During two years this noble chief was transferred from castle to castle, no fixed place of residence having been assigned him; but at last, in 1849, Amboise was selected as the *locale* of his exile, and thither he was conducted at the close of the month of November, with all his retinue. His household—if that domestic word can be applied to the abnormal interior arrangements of an Oriental chief—consisted of five wives and their children! He was also accompanied by his nephews and brothers—one of whom had ordered the massacre of two hundred French soldiers in Algeria—his mother, the preceptor of his children, and a suitable number of servants and quondam slaves. He was on terms of the greatest friendship and courtesy with the neighbouring gentry, who, recognising the superiority of his mind, his greatness and equanimity under disastrous reverses of fortune, and admiring the peculiar

grace of his manners, were greatly pleased to maintain social intercourse with him. A friend of ours, M. le Marquis de * * *, who was himself enjoying the hospitality of the venerable Vicomte Walsh, at the fine old Château de Chaumont, within a drive of Amboise, had the good fortune to witness the incidents of a visit paid by the emir to the vicomte, who had invited him to see his castle and domain.

"I shall not attempt," says the marquis, in a letter to ourselves, "to paint to you this remarkable man, much less shall I be able to describe the profound impression his aspect has left upon my memory. At the appointed hour he arrived with his Oriental retinue in great state. An elegant collation had been prepared for the emir, who was received on the *perron* with every distinction by the noble *châtelains*. His habits were proverbially abstemious, and on this occasion, whether it were that this was not his prescribed hour for eating, or whether that the laws of his religion forbade his sharing the repasts of Christians, he took but one apricot, and afterwards a cup of coffee. A visit to the park was then proposed, and the party left the table. You would hardly believe how imposing was the effect, as the emir, wearing his snow-white burnous, and followed by his suite in their picturesque and brilliant Oriental attire, issued from beneath the grand and sombre arches of that magnificent old mediæval castle, surrounded by an interesting gathering of distinguished men, and ladies, wearing rich toilets, who had been invited to meet him. Amongst these were Charles Berryer, our celebrated advocate and orator; M. d'Arlincourt, the witty and admired pamphleteer; the Vicomte Walsh, author of so many popular works; and others not less noted. The emir, with graceful courtesy, offered his arm to Madame la Vicomtesse, and beside them walked the Capitaine Boissonnet, who served

as interpreter. The promenade lasted little short o an hour, when they re-entered the drawing-room, and the emir was requested to inscribe his name in the visitors' album. The Arab chief complied with the alacrity of a polished gentleman, and without any apparent effort traced the following lines, glowing with that poetry peculiar to the genius of Eastern races, and containing a delicately-expressed but flattering compliment to his hosts. The following is a literal translation of them, kindly made by Capitaine Boissonnet, a learned Oriental scholar :—

"'Gloire au Dieu unique.

"'J'ai été ravi d'admiration à l'aspect de Chaumont,
Brillant sur la montagne, comme un astre à son lever ;
Mais Chaumont semblait me dire : "Cesse de t'étonner,
Je suis l'œuvre du tems et de maîtres illustres ;
Garde ton admiration pour mes hôtes d'aujourd'hui,
Qui conservent si bien les nobles traditions de leurs devanciers."
Salut sur quiconque parcourrera ces lignes
De la part de celui qui les a écrites.

"'Abd-el-Kader ben Mah hiddîn,
3 Chirnan 1267 (1er Août, 1851).'"

It had been long before the proud and once independent chief could resign himself to the humiliating idea of dependence and captivity, and with them to the usages of a life altogether new to him, although within his own dwelling he preserved as much as possible the habits and regulations, the customs and observances, peculiar to his own people and his own religion. His desperate struggles in the gigantic conflict which had preceded his capture, and the violation of the *Traité de la Tafna*, indeed, seemed to render all possible precautionary measures necessary. By degrees, however, this severity was relaxed, and under the influence of the liberal treatment shown him, and the good understanding which arose between him and those with whom he was privately acquainted, he became more reconciled to his lot.

The influence he exercised over his family and dependants was very remarkable. They looked up to him with a devotion only inspired by a being of recognised superiority, and which in their eyes was still as incontestable as in the days of his supremest authority and power. He was at once their temporal chief and their spiritual guide. It was he who recited to them the texts of the Koran, and gave them his commentaries thereon, when they met together for prayer. Besides these spiritual ministrations, and the exercise of the sacredotal office, he wrote, read, meditated, and compiled unceasingly. Since his arrival at Amboise he had already composed two bulky volumes in manuscript—one being his own biography, the other a philosophical treaty upon the legality of oaths; he had also written a great deal of poetry, which we were assured by a competent judge was singularly beautiful and original.

His mother, Kohra, was the guardian and protectress of the entire colony; she was a woman of remarkable endowments and superior intelligence; her presence was a providence, supporting, encouraging, consoling, directing, cheering all with words of confidence and resignation.

The wives had in no way altered their position in consequence of their residence in France; their life was as retired within the Château of Amboise as under the tent of the desert, invisible to every eye but that of their spouse and master. Each *ménage* formed a separate group, and, so to speak, a distinct family, and so inviolable was the privacy of each that Abd-el-Kader himself held no intercourse with his own sisters-in-law. Indeed, the women occupied their whole time with their toilet and their children; all the domestic work, including cooking, being attended to by the negresses. Among the kaliphs who had remained faithful to him, and shared his

expatriation, were Ben Allah, Ben Thami, and Kara Mohammed, who all had their families about them.

Abd-el-Kader had been joined at Amboise by another nephew, who had not been able to come up with him at the time of his surrender, but who had ever since been hiding in Morocco, avoiding, with extreme vigilance and considerable danger, the pursuit of the police of that province, and it was only after two or three hairbreadth escapes that he at length reached the coast, obtaining permission of the Government to share the captivity of his father and uncle. His arrival was the occasion of great rejoicings, and these festivities were but the prelude to others caused by an event which explains much of the young man's anxiety to rejoin his kinsmen. Abd-el-Kader had a beautiful daughter, to whom her cousin had been affianced from childhood, and it was not long after he came among them that the old walls of Amboise echoed the merry sounds which told that the wedding of the young pair was celebrated that day.

All was not joy within the castle, however, for Amboise was also witness to the heartfelt grief of the emir on the loss of one of his numerous progeny and of his youngest and favourite wife, who died of consumption, falling a victim to the rigour of the climate, which was too severe for one nurtured in the sunnier and sultrier atmosphere of an African home. Before long, only two of these ladies remained, and these were spared to survive him.

In the month of October, 1852, on the occasion of his journey to Bordeaux, the present Emperor—then "Président de la République"—visited Amboise and liberated his noble and illustrious prisoner. Abd-el-Kader quitted Amboise on the 20th of November following, after a residence there of three years, and repaired to Brousse, a spot he had himself chosen, in

order to enjoy his liberty at a distance from his African possessions, which he undertook never again to disturb by his presence.

In order to preserve the remembrance of the sojourn of their distinguished prisoner in the domain of Amboise, the municipal authorities of the period, at the head of whom was M. Trouvé, the mayor, erected a modest monument on the south side of the park, near the "Porte des Lions." A subscription list for the purpose was soon filled up, and was headed by the name of the "chef de l'Etat." This monument, it was decided, should be in the form of a tomb, and should cover the spot beneath which were interred all the individuals, to the large number of twenty-seven, who had died among the emir's followers during his brief stay.

Our first visit to the Château d'Amboise was in 1847, where it stood, as we have described, fair and proud in the first days of an elaborate and costly restoration. Our second was some twelve years later, and melancholy was the state of dilapidation into which everything, within and without, had fallen.

We regretted that our first bright and poetical impression should have been disfigured and destroyed by what we then saw, more especially as we knew that the woeful havoc before us was not due to the crumbling of a venerable decay nor the legitimate, if effacing, work of time, but the barbarous result of wanton ill-usage, violence, and neglect.

It was not very wise policy to establish a Mohammedan colony within a dwelling adapted to European habits. According to the rites of the Moslem faith, all the flesh of which its votaries partake must be slain by their own religionists; accordingly, after contemplating the noble figure and picturesque attire of the illustrious prisoner—after admiring the dignity and repose, the tranquillity and resignation of the recumbent

exile languidly smoking his amber calumet—after musing with a certain awe on the solemnity with which he assumes the patriarchal offices of chieftain, father, and priest, we must turn from the glowing picture our imagination had painted of Abd-el-Kader's grandeur to the less poetical aspect of his character. We now behold him, regardless of the usages of civilised life, with his own hands slaughtering—within-doors and in the very halls once occupied by the dainty queens, and kings, and nobles of France—the daily sheep which supplies the material wants of his carnivorous household. This is bad enough, but besides becoming a charnel-house, the noble old castle was, under Moslem rule, perverted to other uses as vile. The most villanous system of cooking, rigidly adhered to with all the determination of religious bigotry, was carried on during the greater part of the day in the *salons* and antechambers. Each branch of Abd-el-Kader's numerous family had, as we have said, its own separate domestic arrangements; consequently, as many families, so many kitchens, whence the odour of "burnt fat" has remained, certainly not "as a sweet-smelling sacrifice," impregnating walls, floors, and ceilings, which reek like those of a melting-house.

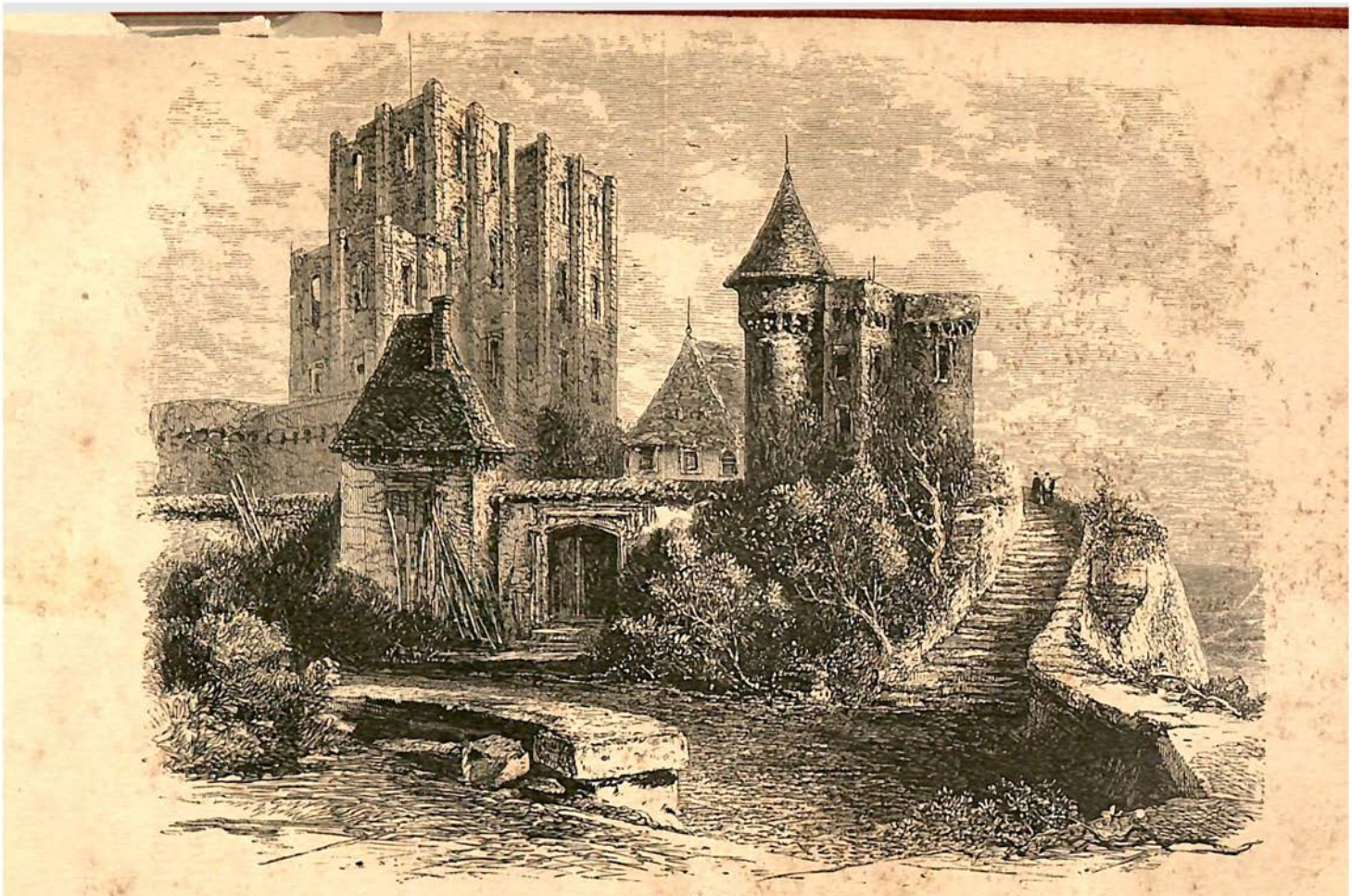
We turned away from these blackened corridors and disfigured chambers with a hopeful conviction that some steps *must* be contemplated for remedying the grievous mischief perpetrated here. If the Arab exiles who had their compulsory dwelling on this consecrated spot knew no better than to deface and destroy its time-honoured walls, France ought to respect herself and her ancestral monarchs, and testify a more becoming regard for one of the most valuable relics they have bequeathed to her.

Amboise has played no unimportant part in the chequered

history of France; it served its kings, monarch after monarch, faithfully and loyally in its youth—a youth which they delighted to embellish and maintain. It is fitting that its hoary towers and ancient battlements should be protected and supported in the days of its decline, if only that it may continue the living record of a glorious and eventful past.

LOCHES.

Road to Loches—St. Croix—Bléré—Valley of the Cher—Breakfast at the "Cheval Blanc"—Sublaines—Celtic Remains—Ruins of the Carthusian Monastery of Liget—Forest of Loches—Approach to the Castle—Unique Site—Early History—Extensive Dimensions of the Building; its vast Subterranean Dungeons; its Iron Cages—Loches under the Celts, the Romans, the Visigoths, Warrior Chiefs, the Comtes d'Anjou, and early English Kings—Loches in the Possession of Richard I.; the Dowry of Queen Berengaria; it passes to Philippe-Auguste; alienated from the Crown, and given to Dreux de Mello; again restored to the Crown under Philippe-le-Bel; the Residence of the Court under Charles VII.—Agnes Sorel; her Beauty, Gentleness, and elevating Influence on the King—Château de Guerche—Beaulieu—La Tour d'Agnes, Dame de Beauté; her Death; her Children by the King—The Tomb of Agnes Sorel; her Epitaphs; the Monks of St. Ours; Desecration of her Grave at the Revolution—Général Pommereul—Mausoleum of Agnes Sorel—Anecdote of François I. on seeing a Portrait of "La Belle des Belles"—Loches under Louis XI.; Nobles and others imprisoned there by this King's command: Geoffroy de St. Aignan; Jean, Duc d'Alençon; Pierre de Brézé; Philippe de Savoie; Charles de Melun, his barbarous Execution—La Tour des Prisonniers—Curious and melancholy Fragments of Inscriptions found on the Dungeon Walls—Loches under Charles VIII., and under the Regent Anne de Beaujeu; under Louis XII.—De Commines' Description of the Iron Cages—The Torture Room, and Relics of the Instruments used there—Intricate Subterranean passages; stairs; trap-doors; vaults; dungeons—The "Tour Neuve"—Lodovico Sforza, or Lodovico il Moro—Pierre de Navarre confined there in 1512; in 1524 the Bishops of Puy and Autun, the Comte de St. Vallier, father of Diane de Poitiers; in 1554, Oudard de Biez, Maréchal de France; in 1588, Charles de Lorraine, Duc d'Elbœuf; in 1648, François de Rochechouart, Le Chevalier de Jars—Legend of the Giant in Armour — Loches as a Palace under François I.; Reception there of Charles Quint—Loches under Henri II. and Catherine de Médicis; under Charles XII.; under Henri III.; under Henri IV.—The Duc d'Epernon —Marie de Médicis—Episode in the Life of the spirited and chivalrous Duc d'Epernon; Death at Loches of his Son Bernard in 1661.



LOCHES.

LOCHÈS.

"These stones, alas! these grey stones; are they all?
All of the famed and the colossal left
By the corrosive hours to fate and me?"

EDGAR POE.

FEW pilgrims to the castles of Touraine would visit Amboise without taking advantage of the proximity to explore what we may perhaps term the gem of the collection—the Château de Loches. At all events we were not of that few, so starting early on a bright morning, while the dew was yet hanging in rainbow-hued drops from the branches, and the birds were chirping their matin song, we retraced our steps as far as St. Croix, and crossed the Cher to the pretty little hamlet of Bléré, remarkable for its neat, white stone houses, and the venerable steeple of its patched-up old church, exhibiting the mingled remains of the Gothic and Romanesque styles. Bléré is in the centre of vineyards; and if in France these do not add much to the beauty of the scenery, they at least impart an air of industry and prosperity to the locality which produces them, and at Bléré the wines it manufactures are the principal source of its wealth. Here we halted to breakfast at the little inn of the "Cheval Blanc," our appetites being tolerably sharpened by our morning drive. Proceeding onwards, our road lay through Sublaines, a less considerable village than Bléré, situated on the plateau which divides the valley of the Cher from that of the Indrois; thence we passed through the forest of Loches, and over a second plateau, separating the valley of

the Indrois from that of the Indre. The most remarkable object seen from the road, about Sublaines, consists, to the east of that spot, of some ruins of doubtful origin, but said by the tradition of the neighbourhood to be those of a "deserted village" of early date, once called Montafilant. Two masses of antiquated masonry likewise arrest the attention here, and have been considered as Celtic monuments. In the midst of the forest of Loches are to be seen the last remains of the Carthusian monastery of Liget, founded in 1176 by Henry II., King of England and Comte d'Anjou, in expiation of the murder of Thomas-à-Becket. Over the entrance doors were inscribed these two lines, recording the cause of its foundation, and the name of the founder:—

"Anglorum Henricus rex, Tomæ cæde cruentus
Ligeticus fundat Cartusiæ monachos."

Very little is left of this once fine monument; the site is admirable, in a solitary valley not far from the Indrois. The ancient chapel still stands close to Liget, and marks the spot first occupied by these cenobites; it was and still is called by the name of Saint Jean de Liget, but is ruined and neglected. Its walls are of enormous thickness, and it appears to have been twenty-six feet in length, and nineteen feet wide. The remains of a very early camp are to be detected in that part of the forest of Loches called Le Chatellier.

As we emerged from the vast old forest, which, in the sombre grandeur of its noble timber, and the width of its grass-grown roads, reminded us much of that of Fontainebleau, we came upon a steep declivity bringing us down to the valley of the Indre, on the opposite side of which, clothed in all the majesty of its singular beauty, burst upon our sight the rocky eminence of Loches—almost a Subiaco of the north. If we were to select among the châteaux of Touraine that which combined

the highest pictorial perfection with the highest historical interest, we must point out that of Loches, as presenting to the artist as well as the archæologist all that is most captivating to the eye and to the intelligence. The approach to the old town, of which this celebrated ancient castle is the nucleus and the glory, is absolutely enchanting; we can remember nothing that will bear comparison with it in any part of France, and however beautiful and attractive may be most of the castellated remains we are exploring, to Loches must we award the right of pre-eminence in almost every particular.

On the summit of a steep and lofty rock, towers this commanding relic of an age whose history is darkly intimated by the stern, uncompromising outline, whether of its rugged pedestal, or of its towers, its dungeons, its earthworks, and its outposts. The edifice carries us back to the early feudal times, and thence again—if we examine it more minutely—to the Merovingian kings, the Visigoth tribes, the Roman legions; for through the hands of all these has passed the fortified palace or palatial fortress of Loches, for it is hard to say to which purpose it has oftenest served.

Scott's record of Loches is a living description, and eloquently conveys the feeling, almost of awe, with which one surveys it. "The sound of the name of Loches," he says, "was even more terrible than that of Plessis itself, for it was destined to the working of those secret acts of tyranny with which even Louis shamed to pollute the interior of his own residence. There were, in this place of dread, dungeons under dungeons, some of them unknown even to the keepers themselves—living graves, to which men were consigned with little hope of further employment, during the rest of their lives, than to breathe impure air and feed on bread and water. In this formidable castle were also those dreadful places of

confinement called "*cages*," in which the wretched prisoner could neither stand upright nor stretch himself at length; an invention, it is said, of Cardinal de la Balue."

Full of gloom and mystery, as well as occasionally of mirth and revelry, are the eventful annals of this vast and romantic château; its length, its breadth, its height, its depth, its extent in every direction, both above and under ground, baffle our scrutiny and bewilder our curiosity, and we see before us matter for days of research and of interesting retrospect, comprising the whole period of French history.

Around the castle, and as it were winding round the rock on which it is perched, bristle the quaint and ancient-looking houses and convents, chapels and hospitals, which constitute the town of Loches. Mingled with the brick, and stone, and slate, which present the most picturesque, irregular, and unmodern forms imaginable, is an agreeable and highly effective admixture of foliage, composing a *tout ensemble* which suggests the hand of an artist in the throwing together of those incomparable materials, while the blue Indre, dividing it from the pretty and less elevated little suburb of Beaulieu, flows calmly through the bridges, and completes the delicious picture.

We established ourselves at a delightfully primitive inn, such a one as we love to find in these antiquated provincial towns, where it is truly refreshing to feel oneself free from the watering-place element; and so charmed were we with Loches that we resolved to visit its château again and again, and to study on the spot where they occurred, those characteristic incidents of bygone times which, we know not why, attach us so powerfully to past generations—generations whose heroes *we* know so intimately, though they were destined never to know *us*, or to appreciate the admiration we accord to their valorous deeds, and the sympathy with which we share their defeats and reverses.

The name of Loches is derived from *Leue*, or *Loch*, the Celtic for a marsh, and the antiquity of the earliest building which surmounted the commanding height on which it stands is attested by the discovery of a Roman altar of exquisitely-finished workmanship within the precincts of the château; but there is no evidence to show whether the invaders of Gaul built a city here, or simply established a garrison, making it a military station. The earliest record we find of any addition in the way of building, to the original fortress, is that which tells us that at the end of the fourth century, St. Eustache, fifth Bishop of Tours, erected on one side of the hill a chapel dedicated to St. Madelaine, and that in the fifth century St. Ours founded a monastery at a little distance below the sacred edifice. Little by little, as generally occurred in such cases, a village grew around and about the monastery and the chapel, and little by little the village became a town. Such was the origin of Loches.

It has been argued that the citadel of the Romans was a mere temporary stronghold, hastily and roughly constructed, and that it must have subsequently given place to a more important edifice, for the present castle would appear to have been of later date than the convent, and St. Gregory of Tours, writing at the end of the sixth century, says, speaking of this monastery, "Cui *nunc* castrum supereminet."

It will not be of much interest to our readers to enter into the misty details that have been collected, with more or less certainty, relative to this castle before the time of the Ducs d'Aquitaine and the turbulent Counts of Anjou, and to know that after the Romans it was possessed by the Visigoths, after their defeat at Voulon by the Franks, and then restored to Aquitaine; then to learn how Pépin, Carloman, and Charles le Chauve successively wrested from one another and again lost

it, rendering it the scene of the quasi-fabulous exploits of warriors whose patronymics have disappeared to give place to the characteristic surnames they acquired in their headlong career. Among these, the chronicles of the time record the daring deeds of "L'Eveille-Chien," "Le Tricheur," "Le Diable de Saumur," "Longue Epée," "Bras de Fer," "Front de Bœuf," and other chiefs whose bands infested the neighbourhood of their strongholds, and whose lawless marauding parties not only pillaged, but laid waste the land. We scarcely feel justified in admiring even the bravery of these ambitious and tyrannical despots, when we view their desperate struggles among one another, simultaneously with the destruction of the labour of the peasants, and the consequent discouragement of their industry.

We can, however, only obtain a vague and confused notion of the practical action of violence and injustice on the one hand, and impatient but unresisting, because hopeless, endurance on the other. As, however, we are supplied with no authentic or satisfactory details of this barbarous epoch, we will pass on to the time when the miserable vassals exchanged one oppression for another, and going back to a period of somewhat less than eight hundred years ago, find this important territory in possession of the powerful Comtes d'Anjou, who well knew how to maintain their own, and to keep their aggressors at a respectful distance.

If the ambition of these warlike nobles was the scourge of the province and the curse of their weaker contemporaries, posterity is indebted to them for the invaluable monuments of their presence which survive—in more or less mutilated condition, it is true—to our own times.

It was during the eleventh and twelfth centuries that the citadel of Loches became the seat and stronghold of Angevine dominion; its tenure was secured to its holders by several

matrimonial alliances, and one of the acts by which they have transmitted to us a knowledge of their art, their tastes, sentiments, and general progress was the erection of the church still standing in the centre of the enclosure, which was considerably extended by them. The original founder of this venerable edifice was Geoffroy Grise-Gonelle, "Comte d'Anjou et de Vendosme et Seigneur de Loches," son of Foulques le Bor. Geoffroy had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and on his return, just after the first crusade, on his way through Constantinople obtained some precious relics, among which was the (*soi-disant*) "belt of the Holy Virgin."

In those ages of active faith, a building of becoming splendour alone was deemed adequate to enshrine so priceless a treasure, and accordingly we may form some idea of the magnificence of the original structure. Lothaire, then King of France, gave, on the 19th September, 962, letters patent for its construction, and Hardouin, fifty-fifth Bishop of Tours, consecrated it in 965.* The elevation of this church is most peculiar, and it is difficult on first approaching it to distinguish the front from the side, and the ornamented Romanesque door is repeated on every side. The vaulting of the interior is unusually bold, being more domed than is commonly seen, while the ribs are very prominent: this portion of the original design is in wonderful preservation, and causes both surprise and admiration in all who examine its structure. Indeed, the whole of its architecture is well worth the study of the connoisseur.

This church, however, as it now stands, cannot be regarded as the original structure, for the one we see comprises extensive restorations and additions, received at the hands of Thomas Pactius or Paccius, Chancellor of the Angevine princes, who,

* *Vide* Mecan, "Hist. Eccl. Tur.," p. 74, No. 2, Dom. Martenne; and "Tablettes Chronologiques de l'Histoire du Château et de la Ville de Loches."

having in 1140 become prior of this collegiate church, occupied himself, forty years later—in 1180—in restoring and perfecting it.* His bust has long stood niched in the wall above the south door.

The costliness of this undertaking enables us to judge of the wealth and consequence of these same "Comtes d'Anjou." Mighty men of purse indeed, as well as of valour, must they have been to build their chapel on a scale of grandeur and dimension fit to match with the most magnificent of contemporary cathedrals. Still we must not lose sight of the important circumstance—suggested by the surprising rapidity with which such an edifice was reared—that they knew the value and convenience of slave labour, and that an almost boundless number of dependants, between whom and them existed an extraordinary mutual recognition of their respective positions, waited abjectly on their behests.

The fortress is of the date of 1180, and its massive keep, which frowns inauspiciously upon the country around, is not in equally good preservation with the sacred edifice. It is, nevertheless, a most important relic of its period, and presents a striking and singular contrast to the collegiate church, seldom met with between two buildings of the same date. It is considered in many respects to resemble the Norman keep of Rochester Castle, and is certainly a fine specimen of early military architecture. The mind of the architect and the purpose he had in view are stamped intelligibly on his work, and we can see that strength and resistance constituted his sole preoccupation, to the prejudice of elegance and grace. The two solid and imposing wings which rear their gigantic proportions before us are some 125 feet high,

* Chronique MSS. des Comtes d'Angers, to be found in the Bibliothèque Impériale at Paris.

the one being about 80 and the other about 40 feet in length, while the outline is simple and severe, and cylindrical forts give increased solidity to the angles. A rude and defiant building it was, constructed for rude and defiant inhabitants. We give a notion of the scale on which it was built when we state that the dungeon, divided into four stories, and reached by stairs cut in the thickness of the wall, was capable of containing 1,200 men.

It would be a curious contemplation, if we could but look back eight centuries, and, peering into the château of Loches, could discern what was the life led by the warriors of those days, when occasional times of peace deprived them of their congenial occupation. There is something so gloomy in the aspect of this vast fortress, that we shudder at the recollection of the dreary and hopeless incarcerations of which tradition tells us the miserable story.

Loches has a special interest for the English visitor, having passed, with the province in which it is situated, into the possession of our early monarchs. To them it became a most important possession, and they held it with a relentless grasp.

In 1194, Richard I., escaping from the iniquitous captivity in which he had been held by the House of Hapsburg, hastened, in desperate alarm, to the rescue of this valuable stronghold, of which Philip-Augustus was in the very process of possessing himself. Châteauneuf had been in similar danger, but Richard began by making that secure, and then prepared as bravely to vindicate his ownership of Loches. He found no less a chieftain than Guy de Laval already in possession, at the head of twenty intrepid knights, and eighty-five skilled archers, all valiant men and true, and fit adversaries for such a foe. Cœur-de-Lion was dauntless: he headed his own troops, and attacked

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them with a vehemence proportioned to the value he set upon the victory. The assault was irresistible, and Guy reluctantly saw himself compelled to yield. He, and five of his valorous knights, with twenty-four archers and 220 soldiers, remained prisoners, and for this time Loches was saved. The contest, however, was not by any means at an end, and the English were not destined to retain many years longer what they bravely fought to defend. Philip-Augustus, baffled in arms, awaited but the opportunity to drive out his inconvenient neighbours by some other means.

On the 6th of April, 1199, Richard, wounded at Chalus, in Limousin, died, as we know, at Chinon, in the midst of his strength and vigour, leaving behind him a disputed heritage. Loches, however, fell to his widowed queen, Berengaria, part of whose dowry it formed, together with Montbazon, and its dependencies.

In 1204, Berengaria having placed her castle of Loches under the protection of the brave Girard d'Athée, originally a serf, and the descendant of French serfs, but who had won his way to favour by his good sword, it was attacked by a strong armed force sent thither by John Lackland, King of England, her brother-in-law. Girard resisted heroically for some time, but the province of Touraine having come into the category of forfeited territory by virtue of the sentence of excommunication passed against John by Pope Innocent III., Loches was now attacked by Philip-Augustus, who ultimately succeeded in taking possession of it, and thus, in 1206, it became an appanage of the crown of France; but not until the brave garrison was fairly starved into submission, and all its ammunition exhausted. The English lost at this time the rich provinces of Poitou, Touraine, Maine, and Anjou, the inhabitants of which had all declared themselves in favour of Prince

Arthur, on whose behalf Philippe professed to be fighting. Cardillac considers that, had Richard survived, England would have retained its possessions in France, as he was so much more popular a prince than John.

Loches being in the possession of Philippe-Auguste, it was given by him—a princely bequest—to Dreux de Mello, Connétable of France, a brave knight who had gained a great reputation by his exploits in France and Palestine, whither he had followed the king.

In the year 1261 this alienation of Loches from the crown was revoked by St. Louis, who, in consideration of a royal grant of 600 livres a year for life to the son of Dreux, who had no children, transmitted for that purpose an Act, dated 12th October in that year, "from Egypt, on the banks of the Nile." Châtillon-sur-Indre was repurchased in the same way.

On his return to France, the king seems to have availed himself of the opportunity to visit the property he thus received, but he did not make it a royal residence. More than thirty years elapsed before Loches again basked in the sunshine of royalty; and it was in 1301, and again, after the lapse of six more years, in 1307, that Philippe-le-Bel passed a few days at the château on his way to Poitiers to confer with Pope Clement V. on the matter of the Templars.

A second time, and under the reign of a subsequent king, half a century later, Loches again became the half-way halt on the road to Poitiers, when Jean-le-Bon arrived there at the head of the flower of French chivalry, then about to give battle to the Black Prince. Nothing could be more promising than the aspect of affairs on the French king's side; victory seemed certain; but, too confident in the advantages of his position, Jean miscalculated their value. The most favourable terms were offered him, but his ambition was to crush the power of

England, and to annihilate her army. The English, driven to desperation at the prospect of defeat, put out a strength which they scarcely suspected themselves of possessing, and the result was that protracted and disastrous humiliation under which France continued to groan long after her ill-advised ruler had ceased to feel its effects. The French army was routed, and the most brilliant of those proud knights who had followed their king to battle remained on the field; the French king was wounded and taken prisoner, and the victory of Poitiers became a perennial glory in the history of our triumphs. The troubles which fell upon France were frightful in their consequences; a period of complete anarchy succeeded, and pervaded all ranks of the monarchy, and but for a truce of two years, obtained by the intermediation of the pope, it would have gone hard with France. Loches again became the prize of the English, who retained it about half a century.

Restored to France, this extensive fortress became at once a state prison and a palace. The royal state displayed there, was, however, at that time not of a very imposing character; Charles VII., the first monarch who inhabited it, was then only "Roi de Bourges," and his court was of the humblest description. His queen, Marie d'Anjou, was a brave and spirited princess, and maintained her husband's courage and her own through all their trials. Her confidence in the future of her country was sanguine, though not more so than subsequent events ultimately justified. In the midst of the general perplexity Joan of Arc appeared, to work out the result of her mysterious mission.

After this time the king ceased to reside permanently at Loches, though he made frequent and prolonged visits to this beautiful spot, the charms of which he appreciated, and with which are connected the more romantic incidents of his life. It

was in 1434, during a sombre epoch in the annals of France, that dawned the consoling—nay, the inspiring—light of a soft, bright star, whose meek and retiring rays were destined to kindle in the heart of the monarch that smouldering courage which eventually wrought the salvation of his country. The wandering and unsettled court of Charles VII., driven from Paris—where Henry VI. (the infant King of England, crowned in the very metropolis of the vanquished and dispirited country) ruled in the person of the Duke of Bedford—had taken refuge in the ancient and loyal city of Bourges, suddenly erected into a new capital to receive its sovereign, for that sovereign could find no shelter in his own palace.

Despite these discouraging circumstances, France had remained French, and its ancient traditions still defied English domination. Chivalry was yet a living reality, and beauty claimed its ascendency over the hearts and imaginations of the youthful monarch and his courtiers. Charles was at this time only twenty-two years of age, and his heart need not have been very susceptible to be touched by the unobtrusive but witching charms of the fair Agnes, whose sweet face has not only been described by contemporary writers, but remains perpetuated in marble to defy the criticism of every visitor to Loches.

The beautiful Demoiselle de Fromenteau—for it was at the château of that name, on the borders of Touraine and Berri, that Agnes Sorel was born—we are told, "avait le front d'une merveilleuse pureté, des yeux bleus et moult vivaces, des cils sy longs et sy noirs qu'ils voileient à demy son doux regard le rendant moult langoureux, un nez fin, les lèvres roses, avec un sourire qui enchantait, et des dents d'enfant, la peau d'une blancheur suave," &c. This marvel of grace, loveliness, and wisdom, was maid of honour to Isabelle de Lorraine, wife of Réné d'Anjou—Réné being the brother of the gentle and

virtuous Marie d'Anjou, wife of Charles VII. and Queen of France.

There is a certain amount of mystery, which history does not help us to unravel, about the earlier details of the romantic passion with which the fair young girl inspired the king; we learn, however, that the first interviews they contrived to arrange, took place in the subterranean chambers of the Château de Loches. The court did not even suspect the admiration of the king, or the reciprocal sentiments of the maiden —but the secret soon ceased to be one; and the sincerity of Agnes's attachment, the purity of her previous life, and the beneficial use she made of her influence over the king, placed her, both at the time and since, in a position rarely attained by any other mistress of a sovereign. The queen herself was attached to Agnes, and not only received her spontaneously at court whenever she could be persuaded to appear, but recognised with gratitude the improvement she had effected in the king's mind. Never did a selfish motive cloud the disinterestedness of her affection. She loved the man, and not the king —she loved him for himself; and her sole ambition was to elevate him, first in his own esteem, and then in that of his subjects and of his enemies—to inspire him with courage to regain his crown, and wisdom to retain it, and to keep herself altogether out of sight, for she knew what she had sacrificed, and was deeply conscious of the price at which she had purchased her lover's emancipation. If ever chivalry overmastered a human heart, and reigned supreme there, in all the purity of generosity and self-devotion, it was that of Agnes Sorel, who did more, perhaps, for Charles and for France than the warlike heroine of modern history, Jeanne d'Arc herself. Without Agnes, Jeanne could have done nothing, for the king did not even comprehend his responsibilities, or his ability to bear

them, until Agnes convinced him of their importance and of his duty; and, furthermore, resolved to withhold her affection until he should render himself worthy of it.

So far from being in the first instance prepossessed by Charles, Agnes had no desire to attract his attention; and when she perceived his *penchant* for her, was slow to return it. When the brave Poton de Xaintrailles remarked to her that the king was deeply smitten by her attractions, she replied, with great simplicity, "La conquête du roi ne sera pas facile; je le révère et l'honore, mais ne crois pas que jamais j'aurai rien à démesler aveque la royne à son sujet."

Thus far she was right; for although she brought herself ultimately to love him so well as to abandon unhesitatingly her character and position for his sake, she certainly never had anything "à démesler aveque la royne," who was far too sensible a woman to suffer mean jealousy to overpower her sense of the obligations due to her rival. She knew that the ascendency of Agnes had resulted not only in elevating, instead of debasing, the king, by opening his intelligence to the high standard of moral excellence she had set before him, but that the result had been the re-establishment of his power and the prosperity of the country.

Agnes was wont to reproach the king with his indolent habits and want of energy, and to taunt him with the ignoble pursuits of his life and the disgraceful indifference with which he saw his possessions in the hands of the English. She added that an astrologer had once predicted that she would be beloved by the greatest monarch in the world; but that the prediction plainly had no reference to him, seeing that he meanly submitted to see himself despoiled of that which God had committed to his guidance: "Je ne puis donc," continued she, "accomplir ma destinée, qu'en passant à la cour d'Angleterre."

Charles was stung by this reproof, and ambition at once became mingled with his love He saw that the esteem of Agnes must be earned as a preliminary to hoping for her affection, and he sought to render himself worthy to obtain it.

Agnes nevertheless received some magnificent tokens of her royal lover's gratitude; he gave her the Comté de Penthièvre, in Brittany, the seigneuries of La Roche-Servière and of Issodun, in Berri; to these he added the Château de Beauté, on the banks of the Marne, in Champagne, on the plea that as his Agnes was already "Dame de Beauté" *de facto*, it was fitting she should be so likewise *de jure;* and by this title was she thenceforth known. This poetical retreat was built by Charles V. in the midst of the Bois de Vincennes, upon the banks of the Marne, and has been thus described by Eustache Deschamps in one of his ballads:—

"Sur tous les lieux plaisants et agréables
Que l'on pourroit dans ce monde trouver,
Edifié de manoirs convenables,
Gais et jolis pour voir et demourer
Joyeusement, puis devant vous prouver
Que c'est à la fin des bois
De Vincennes, que fit faire le Roy
Charles, que Dieu donne paix, joie et santé
Son fils aîné, Dauphin de Viennois,
Donna le nom à ce lieu de Beauté.

"Et c'est bon droit, car moult est délectable;
L'on y oit le rossignol chanter
Marne l'enceint, les hauts bois profitables
Couvrent les daims,
Des oiselets ouïr la douce voix
Dans la saison du printems et d'été,
Où gentil Mai, qui est si noble mois,
Donna ce nom à ce lieu de Beauté.

"Les prés enceignent les jardins délectables,
Les beaux préaulx, fontaine belle et claire,
Vignes aussi et prés arables
Moulins tournans, beaux plains à regarder,

Et beaux viviers pour les poissons
Où l'on peut se retirer en sureté.
Pour tous les points, le beau Prince Courtois
Donna ce nom à ce lieu de Beauté."

It was in the Manoir de Beauté that Charles, who was constantly struggling with his own weak disposition, and the obstacles which seemed continually to rise up in the way of his success, came to seek consolation and counsel from her who was rather his friend than his mistress. Always devoted, always brave, Agnes met him with a smile, and dismissed him full of hope and resolution. To her suggestion was due the loan of 10,000,000 livres Charles obtained from Jacques Cœur to carry on his military operations; and, in order to encourage him in the prosecution of them, she even consented to share the privations of camp-life, and accompanied him in his campaign to Normandy.

Near Loches, on the Creuse, are the remains of another residence built by Charles VII. for Agnes, where she used to receive his visits when the court was at Loches, and where he often reposed in going to and from the chase in the adjacent forests: this is the Château de Guerche. It rises above 100 feet from the water, and is remarkable rather for height and mass than for beauty. At the angles are four towers, and amid the somewhat defaced frescoes which survive may be traced the *chiffre* of Agnes, "A" superposed over "L," signifying, by a monogrammatic device, the name of the fair mistress of the place, "A-Sur-el;" orthography was not much looked to in those days. A statue of the favourite still stands in the chapel.

It has been said that, besides the other domains bestowed by this king on Agnes Sorel, Loches, with its important territory, came into her possession. We can, however, find no record of this gift, nor any document which proves she ever possessed it; on the contrary, the chroniclers of the time relate that when

she quitted Guerche, in order to be nearer the king, she took up her abode in a modest mansion at Beaulieu, the suburb on the opposite bank of the Indre, until the king built her a turret adjoining the château, whither she removed, and which still bears her name. The site was selected with a happy appreciation of the exquisite loveliness with which nature had surrounded it.

The retiring disposition of the gentle Agnes led her to seek privacy, and, as if conscious of the false position she occupied, to withdraw from the too curious gaze even of the court-minions. Charles's wish, therefore, in bringing her into closer proximity, was to compensate for the society of which she was deprived, by placing around her a richer portion of the beauties of nature, and since for his sake she had chosen a prison for her dwelling, to render that prison as cheerful and attractive as possible. From her turret windows, then, Agnes could survey the fertile and smiling valley of the Indre, whose windings meander between its vine-clad banks like a silver thread, and the verdant meads which undulate on either side were bounded by the noble forest of gigantic and venerable oak trees. Of the house at Beaulieu, the remains are scarcely recognisable as the residence of any one so nearly allied to royalty. It was occupied by Catherine de Médicis in 1576, and was called "la Maison de la Reine." In the eighteenth century it became a barrack, and, subsequently, a "dépôt de Mendicité."

Many important additions were made to the Château de Loches during this reign, and are worthy relics of a period justly celebrated for the taste and magnificence of its monuments.

Agnes Sorel was not only envied and maligned by the courtiers of her time, but she was detested by the malevolent and manœuvring Dauphin—afterwards Louis XI.—who sys-

tematically hated everything that his father loved, and never forgave her the part she had taken in counselling the king to put down, with firmness and resolution, the revolt headed by this unfilial son. Dark suspicions were rife at the time, and have never been satisfactorily cleared up, to the effect that he was not guiltless of her death, though by some historians it has been attributed to a *fausse couche*, occasioned by her anxiety about the king. Charles was fighting in Normandy when he heard of Agnes's fatal illness. He hastened to the Château de Mesnil, close to the abbey of Jumièges, whither she had summoned him to caution him against a suspected conspiracy; but he only arrived in time to receive her latest sighs.

This château has passed away, and all that remains of Mesnil-la-Belle has been converted into a peasant's cottage, which still retains its fifteenth-century chimneys, together with the recollection that here the beautiful and intelligent, the gentle yet spirited, Agnes Sorel breathed her last, in the arms of her royal lover. She was born in 1400, and died at six o'clock in the evening of the 9th February, 1450, leaving three daughters by the king—Charlotte, the eldest, married in 1462 to Jacques de Brézé, Grand Sénéchal de Normandie, son of Pierre de Brézé, said to have been the only true friend Louis XI. ever had, though Philippe de Commines, who is too apt to echo the suspicions of that dark-minded king, hints that he was betraying him at the very time he was giving his life to save that of Louis.

Charlotte, it appears, was faithless to her husband, who, learning the particulars of a rendezvous she had given to a favoured lover, lay in wait for the guilty pair, and surprising them, stabbed his wife to the heart at Romiers, near Dourdan, on the 14th June, 1476. As her crime was not satisfactorily

proved, the husband was prosecuted, and condemned to pay a fine of 100,000 crowns, but not being able to meet this demand, his lands were confiscated. After the death of Louis XI. he appealed to Parliament; and in 1484 all the proceedings against him were nullified, and he re-entered into possession of his property.

The second daughter, Agnes, was married to Olivier de Coetivi, Seigneur de Taillebourg; and a third to Antoine de Beuil, Comte de Saucerre.

Charles honoured the remains of Agnes with a costly interment. Her body was carried to Loches, and inhumed in the chancel of the Church of St. Ours, where a rich and tasteful monument was erected over it to her memory by Jacques Cœur. On it were many inscriptions, the following being the only one in French:—

"Cy-gist noble damoselle Agnés Seurelle, en son vivant dame de Beauté de Roquesérien, d'Issodun et de Vernon-sur-Seine: piteuse envers toutes gens et qui largement donnait de son bien aux églises et aux pauvres; laquelle trépassa le neufviesme jour de Février, l'an de grâce mil quatre cent quarante-neuf. Priez Dieu pour l'âme d'elle."

Below this stood these words—

"O Mort! toujours inflexible, tu as arraché de la vie un bien beau corps dans ses jeunes années."

The poet Baïf wrote upon her death the following philosophical ballad:—

"Hélas! Elle ne put rompre la destinée
Qui pour trancher ses jours l'avait ici menée
Où la mort la surprit. . . . O Mort! cette beauté
Devait par sa douceur flêchir ta cruauté;
Mais, la ravissant à la fleur de son âge
Si grand que tu cuidais n'a esté ton outrage;
Car si elle eut fourni l'entier nombre de jours
Que lui pouvait donner de Nature le cours

Ses beaux traits, son beau teint, et sa belle charnure
De la tarde vieillesse allait subir l'injure,
Et le surnom de telle avecques sa beauté
Luy fust pour jamais par les hommes osté,
Mais jusques à sa mort l'ayant vue toujours telle
Ne pouvoit luy oster le surnom de 'belle.'"

Agnes bequeathed to the chapter of the collegiate church at Loches 2,000 golden crowns, besides jewels and a magnificent piece of tapestry, on the understanding that her remains were to be interred in the choir.

Louis XI., having come to the throne, was one day visiting this church, when the monks, whose sense of gratitude does not seem to have been very delicate, thinking to flatter the king, who had always been inimical to Agnes, suggested that the purity of her life was not such as to justify them in allowing so distinguished a place to her remains, and inquired whether the king would not wish them removed.

"By all means," replied Louis; "and as you will then no longer be entitled to her bequests, you can restore them to me, especially as they are unworthy to be touched by such pious hands as yours."

The monks, who were not to be appeased by the compensatory virtues of Agnes, although they admitted "qu'elle fut piteuse envers toutes gens, qui largement donnoit de son bien aux pauvres," on weighing the king's view of the case, preferred leaving things as they were; and Agnes's body continued to repose in peace until the reign of Louis XVI., when the mausoleum was opened, and within the triple coffin in which she had been interred were found only a few bones. The maxillary bones were sound, and contained the double circle of teeth, while a mass of beautiful flaxen hair also remained in perfect preservation. M. de Conzié, Archbishop of Tours, who was present at the opening of the coffin, retained a portion of the latter.

After this event the tomb was removed from the choir into the nave.

In 1793 it was violated by the fanatics of the Revolution, who strewed the bones about, pulled out the teeth, and scattered to the winds those long silken tresses, made to be delicately caressed by the jewelled hand of a king, but destined also—alas for the vicissitudes of human affairs!—to be roughly torn by the sanguinary fists of an infuriated mob. It was not until 1806 that this desecrated tomb was put together once more, and placed in the chapel constructed to receive it, within the turret built for Agnes's occupation while living, and still called by her name. This turret opens on the terrace of the château.

Général Pommereul, prefect of the département d'Indre-et-Loire, thus concludes the pompous and self-conscious inscription he caused to be engraven on the stones when the monument was finally restored:—

"Des hommes sensibles receuillirent les restes d'Agnès,
Et le Général Pommereul, préfét d'Indre-et-Loire,
Releva le mausolée de la seule maîtresse de nos rois
Qui ait bien mérité de la patrie,
En mettant pour prix de ses faveurs
L'expulsion des Anglois de France."

The mausoleum is of black marble, raised from the pavement by two steps, and surmounted by a broad slab of the same, on which reclines an artistically-designed representation of the beautiful Agnes, in white marble. Her features are regular and delicate, and her face is a fine oval; it expresses a modesty and gentleness, in character with the attitude of prayer in which her hands are held, being joined and raised. Her hair is waved, and parted on either side her brow, which is encircled by a narrow bandlet. Over her bend two angels, whose wings form a graceful canopy round her head; her figure is tastefully

draped, and the long folds cover her feet, which rest on two lambs crouching there.

Before we take leave of the "Belle des Belles," we will record here an anecdote of François I. *à propos* of this celebrated lady. The monarch, being one day at the house of Artus-Gouffier de Boisy, Comte d'Etampes, Grand Maître de France, was amusing himself by turning over a portfolio belonging to Madame de Boisy—for this lady (who was of the house of Hangest) loved painting, and had executed with much skill the portraits of several illustrious persons, among others of Agnes Sorel. François, who was fond of mottoes and anagrams, wrote beneath every one of them such verses and legends as occurred to him: beneath that of the beautiful Agnes he penned the following impromptu lines:—

"Gentille Agnés! plus d'honneur tu mérites,
La cause estant de France recouvrer,
Que ce que peut dedans un cloistre ouvrer,
Close nonain, ou bien dévot hermite."

Charles VII. departed this life at Méhun-sur-Yèvre on the 22nd July, 1461, aged fifty-eight, a prey to the too just suspicions he entertained of his son's evil intentions towards him, literally dying from the very apprehension of death.

The Comte de Dunois, after the dinner given in the abbey on the occasion of the obsequies of the king, is said to have exclaimed: "Nous avons perdu notre maître; que chacun songe à se pourvoir"—a significant observation, and one which showed in what estimation the new monarch was held.

As we have before intimated, Louis XI. hated his father, and held in contempt every act of his reign. His mind seemed perversely set on overturning every measure of his government and altering every law that he had passed. As Charles had employed the time of his residence at Loches in

beautifying and improving the palace, Louis turned his attention to the sterner attributes of the building, and laid out large sums in strengthening the fortifications and multiplying the dungeons and cells.

Before his time many wretched state-prisoners had groaned away their lives behind these massive walls in hopeless captivity: there they found time to deplore the fatal ambition which, having failed in its aspirations, became a crime, and was condemned to this cruel expiation. Others there had been whose misfortune it was, whether rashly or unconsciously, to have displeased those more powerful than themselves, and who were doomed to wear away their lives in gloomy sequestration without so much as knowing of what they were accused. Some were suffered to linger in protracted despair, others to perish by starvation, while many became the victims of bloody and violent deaths. Terrible indeed, could they be disclosed, would be the sanguinary and barbarous records of that formidable citadel, the drawbridge of which, once passed, its occupants had disappeared for ever from the living world, and over that yawning gateway might truly have been inscribed—"*Vestigia nulla retrorsùm!*"

In the eleventh century, Geoffroy de St. Aignan was incarcerated, and finally strangled, in his dark and wretched dungeon here; and Thibault III., Comte de Tours, after his defeat at Nouy, underwent the most cruel treatment within this fortress.

Jean, Duc d'Alençon, was thrown into one of the gloomiest of its cells by order of Charles VII., on the discovery that he had been aiding and abetting the secret machinations of the ungrateful and heartless Dauphin, always employed in secretly fomenting discord and dissatisfaction in the kingdom. He was detained there from 1458 to 1461.

But it was during the reign of Louis XI. that the prisons of Loches came most actively into requisition, and if we could detail the secret history of that "reign of terror," we should not perhaps be surprised that he found it necessary to increase their number.

Through these sombre retreats passed, at intervals, Pierre de Brézé, the devoted friend and adherent of Louis XI., whose unreserved sacrifice not only of his love and service, but of his very life, did not suffice to insure him from the mistrust and persecution of his ungrateful master. But Louis was so unused to sincerity and friendship, that when he was served with disinterested loyalty he did not even recognise it; and, accustomed as he was to meet with that subserviency which proceeds from slavish fear, he thought those about him incapable of any other sentiment.

Philippe de Savoie was long in detention at Loches, with distinguished contemporaries. In 1468 the name of Charles de Melun, Baron des Landes et de Normantelle, was added to this melancholy list. As soon as Louis XI. came to the throne, his first measures were directed against those who had either opposed him or served him coldly during his father's reign. Among these was Charles de Melun, at that time lieutenant-general of the whole kingdom. He was attainted of high treason, deprived of his charges, which were given to his bitterest enemy, Antoine de Chabannes, together with his confiscated goods; he was confined in a dungeon at Loches, and, after a confession of crimes he had never committed had been wrung from him by torture, he was condemned to be beheaded, and the sentence was executed on the Place du Petit Andelys. The first blow having failed to deprive him of life, it is said he rose up, all mangled as he was, and protested his innocence. The people, moved at the piteous sight, cried shame on the exe-

cutioner; but at the next stroke the head of the unfortunate noble was severed from his body. The crime for which he was arraigned was that of suffering the Seigneur de Lau to escape, although he answered for him on his life.

To Havancourt, as well as to Cardinal de la Balue, is attributed the invention of those instruments of refined cruelty, yclept "cages," in which Louis XI. was wont to seclude his victims. In one of these De la Balue himself was imprisoned for eleven years, and only recovered his liberty in 1480, at the solicitation of Cardinal de la Roveré. After doing all the mischief in his power, he died at Ancona in 1492.

Some writers have denied that the *Cage Balue*, as it is still called, ever served the purpose we have stated; but M. de la Gourmerie, having discovered among the records of the expenses of Louis XI. the following item, we are justified in believing those who have affirmed this circumstance. It stands thus:—"A Guion de Buc, escuier, sieur de Ver, maistre d'hostel du Roy, la somme de 60 livres tournois, pour icelle estre par luy employée à faire faire une cage de fer, pour la surreté et garde de la personne du Cardinal d'Angiers."

The cardinal was subsequently removed to Montbazon, and then Jean, fifth Duc d'Alençon; twice condemned to death for high treason, and twice pardoned by Louis XI., succeeded to the tenancy of his cage, which he occupied three months.

Louis XI. was accustomed to leave his unhappy and ill-used wife, Charlotte de Savoie, during long periods at the Château de Loches, sometimes with, but often without, their son, afterwards Charles VIII., whose infancy and childhood were passed between Amboise and Loches.

The round tower known as "la Tour Neuve," or "Tour des Prisonniers," rising from the rock at the N.W. angle of the fortress, was erected by Louis XI., less for the sake of increasing the strength of the place than in order to hold in safe

keeping those state prisoners of whom he entertained most apprehension. A separate and distinct passage communicated with it. "This," says M. Baillargé, "is a lugubrious portion of the building; and when we behold this tower, or rather all that remains of it, we see it precisely as it was in the time of Loüis XI. One considerable wing, reserved especially for prisoners of note, is now a mass of ruins. It fell in, all at once, in the year 1815, on the morrow of the liberation of an army agent who had been consigned there by way of example. All in this château is on a royal scale; the chimneys in these vast halls are vast themselves, and the height of the ceilings is unusual. Was it in mockery or in simplicity—we know not—that some poor wretch confined here, scratched on the walls the following words we now read, in rough letters—

'Entrez Messievrs
Ches le Roy
Nostre Maistre?'"

In the foundations of this tower is shown a circular vaulted hall; air and light only reach it by narrow port-holes pierced in the tufa, scarcely less than thirteen feet in thickness. It is arrived at by a secret descending staircase of forty-three steps, one of the diabolical inventions of Louis XI., who seems to have found his principal interest in life in seeking out the most ingenious cruelties, and his principal use of power in exercising them against those who were hapless enough to offend him.

Under the reign of Charles VIII., Philippe de Commines, the chronicler, was taken, together with Geoffroy de Pompadour, Grand Aumônier de France, and George d'Amboise, at that time Bishop of Montauban, the attached friend of the Duc d'Orléans. All these were engaged in the revolt against the regent, headed by the prince, but which entirely failed; and he and all his followers fell into the hands of Anne de Beaujeu, eldest sister to the king. They were subjected to a somewhat

severe penance, and Louis, afterwards Louis XII., after being transferred from prison to prison, was at last placed in durance at Bourges, together with George d'Amboise, and remained there for two years. They were thence removed to Loches for a third year. Louis's prison-cell was one of those frightful cages brought into vogue under Louis XI.; he was not even suffered to write, and his gaoler rendered his captivity more severe by the needless barbarity with which he executed his orders. During this time, Jeanne de France, his wife, was his consoler and his companion; she not only shared his hard fate, but supported him by her gentle exhortations, and encouraged him by her unceasing efforts to obtain his liberation, and when at length he recovered his liberty, he felt that he owed it entirely to her intercession.

It should be told to the honour of Louis, that if when he became king he did not "avenge the injuries of the Duc d'Orléans," at all events he did not always forget the services which had been rendered to him before he came to the throne. He showed his gratitude to the Cardinal d'Amboise in many ways, and only fulfilled an act of justice at once to the country, and to that prelate himself, when he appointed him prime minister. His prudent policy and disinterested conduct justified the king's choice, and the nation ratified the appointment by spontaneously according to him the name they had given to the king himself, of "Père du Peuple."

Philippe de Commines' detention in Loches lasted nearly a year, and gave him the opportunity of describing (with a minuteness which savours of practical experience) the frightful receptacles of which we have been speaking, called iron cages. "They were constructed," he says, "de barreaux de fer très serrés, recouverts de plaques de fer, par dedans et par dehors, aveques terribles serrures." Of their dimensions he says, they

were almost eight feet in width, but of the height he speaks somewhat vaguely when he describes it as "celle d'un homme, et un pied de plus." Commines ought to have known something about it, seeing "qu'il en avait tasté pendant l'espace de huict mois."

In the "Tour Neuve" we found the "Salle de la Question," a place one shudders to enter, albeit doubting whether men ever were the monsters which the records of such places would have us suppose. Some odd bits of rusty iron were exhibited to us as remains of the instruments of torture said to have been applied here. Could these dumb witnesses have spoken, what a satisfaction it would have been to learn that—as we were inclined to suspect—they were (like the traditions which purport to attach to them) modern fabrications, carefully got up to amuse the gaping tourist; but we appeal in vain to walls, and gratings, and trap-doors, and *soupiraux*, and *meurtrières;* they can only accord the mute evidence of their formidable aspect, and so we came away, divided between our wish to doubt and our obligation to believe.

This portion of the château is now a prison, but its cages and *oubliettes* are obsolete, and its occupants are no longer nobles or cardinals.

We ascended this impregnable and interesting tower, pondering, step by step, as we went, on the venerable age and eventful past of the castellated structure we were exploring, and we reached the summit, whence we were enabled to appreciate the view across the water to Beaulieu, and down the valley of the Indre, as well as the impression we here gained of the immense extent and importance of the castle itself.

The gloomiest of the dungeon-cells are not within the "Tour Neuve." We were conducted to these through interminable passages and labyrinthine windings, and found them

in an underground depth constituting the foundations of a third tower, begun by Louis XI., who gave, it is said, his personal attention to the construction of these secret hiding-places, within which men might—and did, perhaps—disappear from the face of the earth; and, while their families were searching every corner of the country for their discovery, were wasting away their miserable lives in alternations of defiance, hope, and maddening despair—worst of all, perhaps—believing themselves forgotten!

This tower has been attributed to Louis XII., but it seems pretty clear that he only built that part of the edifice which rises above the level of the ground, and which is now all demolished, with the exception of a *salle des gardes*.

When Charles VIII. became king, he did not abandon Loches; his attachment for the places in which his dreary childhood was passed, seems to have formed a feature in his singular character. He spent some time at Loches with his young queen, Anne de Bretagne, and built the great tower, which he left to his successor to complete. Anne revisited Loches with her second husband, Louis XII., and took a double interest in the progress of the works.

One of the most interesting and curious portions of the Château de Loches is the place of imprisonment of Lodovico Sforza, otherwise called Louis le Maure, being thus surnamed, according to some, on account of his *teint basané*, while others attribute it to the circumstance of his having taken a mulberry tree (*moro*) for his *devise*. The approach to this remote and gloomy abode is lugubrious in the extreme, and its downward depth is absolutely appalling. We descended a narrow, uneven staircase, till we reached the level of the base of the moat, every landing being blocked by a massive door; and thence, starting again downwards by another staircase, of spiral form,

leading to the vaults below the *oubliettes*, we counted one hundred steps! We stood aghast at the thought that one human creature could have been condemned, by the decree of another, to pass the term of his natural life at a depth of one hundred footfalls below the sun-lit world made for him and his fellow-men.

We have little sympathy with such criminals as Louis le Maure, but if anything could make us remember that, after all, he was a fellow-man, it would be the aggravated horrors of his protracted captivity. Père Berthier characterises Lodovico as "un lâche et un traître;" and, indeed, his history presents a long series of crimes, and with the recollection of these he was abandoned to himself in a den of oblivion, whence every ray of mercy was shut out.

His first act on the death of his brother, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan, second of the name, was to wrest the government from the son he had left, a feeble infant under the tutelage of his mother and the secretary of state, Cecus Simoneta. He accordingly drove the duchess from Milan, and caused the venerable old Simoneta to be beheaded, although upwards of seventy years of age. Having seized the government, he took his nephew's life by slow poison, and the boy died at Pavia, in 1494, a few days after the entry of Charles VIII., King of France, into that city. When Charles VIII. quitted Italy he left Lodovico firmly established in his power: he had undertaken to defend and support him against all his enemies, in exchange for men, money, and vessels he had supplied to him. Nevertheless, Lodovico's own want of good faith rendered him mistrustful of every one else; and apprehending the pretensions of the Duke of Orleans, of which he made no secret to the government of Milan, he did not long remain friendly with France. He soon began to testify his hostility

towards his recent allies in a mode worthy only of such a miscreant as he. It happened that, being the first year of the century, the jubilee attracted an unusual number of pilgrims to Rome. Taking advantage of this circumstance, Lodovico gave secret orders, assisted by large bribes, to the keepers of the hostelries, on condition that they should put to death all the travellers whom they should receive coming from that country: a ducat a head, with immunity from punishment, was the price offered for these treacherous assassinations. The cruelties, however, thus committed were afterwards visited upon their perpetrators with the severity they deserved; for the French, learning the treatment to which their countrymen had been subjected, carried fire and sword into all the places where their companions had been massacred.

In the meantime Charles died, and Louis XII. considering himself entitled to the duchy of Milan, in right of his grandmother, Valentine Visconti (wife of the murdered Duc d'Orléans, brother of Charles VI.), came down upon Milan, which was then held by the Sforzas. Lodovico il Moro was at that time fully established there as sovereign, and being of an intrepid character, he valiantly defended his little kingdom; but on the 10th April, 1500, he was betrayed by the Swiss, who sold him and delivered him to the French. Lodovico fell into the power of Louis de la Trémouille, who handed him over to his master, Louis XII. Louis did not on this occasion manifest his wonted generosity, and the King of France, for once at least, condescended to "avenge the injuries of the Duc d'Orléans," and Lodovico was conducted first to Pierre-Encise, then to St. Georges, in Berri, and finally to Loches, where he died.

Active in intelligence, but of a grovelling mind, Lodovico thought that cleverness was everything; he piqued himself on his astuteness, and thought he had shown uncommon tact in

calling Charles VIII. into Italy, and then driving him out again; he also boasted of his treatment of the Arragonese, and observed, "que le Christ au ciel et Lodovico il Moro sur la terre savaient seuls les buts de cette guerre."

Commines, who knew him well, says of him—"Ludovic était homme très saige mais fort craintif et bien souple quand il avait peur; aussi homme sans foi s'il veult son profit pour la rompre." We gather, however, from his biographers that he was not without refinement, and appreciated the value of moral cultivation. He protected letters, and surrounded himself with men of learning, poets, and artists. He opened a theatre, formed an academy, enlarged the university of Pavia, and embellished Milan, Pavia, Vigevano, and other cities, with superb buildings, so that some have considered it no disparagement to compare him with Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Argellati supplies us with a list of Latin epistles, harangues, diplomatic instructions, and Italian poems, which were left by Lodovico il Moro. As we are enumerating the better attributes of his nature, we may class among these his affection for his wife Beatrice: he had her remains preserved in an urn, which he carried about with him whenever he went on a journey.

Lodovico had taken, as we have said, a mulberry tree for his *devise;* he added to it the motto:—"D'autant que le mûrier est tardif à bouter fleurs en printems, qui fait que bien peu souvent est surpris des brumes." The Milanese prince, however, allowed himself to be *surprised,* and singularly enough became the victim of that nebulous atmosphere his motto seemed instinctively to deprecate.

During the greater part of the last five sequestered years of his wretched life, not a beam of sunshine ever penetrated through that long, deeply-embrasured slit, which could only in mockery be termed a window. The vast, dimly-lighted chamber, in which

one feels oneself, as it were, buried out of the sight and hearing of the living world, becomes somewhat less obscure as the eye accustoms itself to the eternal crepuscule, but it is only after some time we are enabled to trace the remains of those curious inscriptions and outlines, in carving which, the hapless prisoner beguiled his weary solitude. On one side we detect a knight with his visor lowered, standing between two cannons, while further on is another with his face exposed; this has been supposed by some to be his own portrait. But a more touching *ébauche* is to be seen on the side opposite the long, narrow port-hole, where the forsaken and forgotten captive has left engraven on the rough wall the traces of a sun-dial, as if he would fain have made the only poor attempt his case admitted to obtain some idea of how the time was passing in the busy, active world above him, of which he was destined no longer to form a part.

We know not if Lodovico, left to the undisturbed contemplation of his own dark thoughts, was ever startled by the sanguinary hue of his past career, and whether, in that dreary, unbroken silence of days which could no longer be distinguished from the nights that divided them, he ever heard the piteous cries of his victims, or caught the echoes of the more prolonged groans of their survivors. We know not if he acknowledged the justice of the retribution by which he was expiating his former cruelties, or whether he sank into gloomy despondency or oblivious madness. In vain we endeavour to connect the scattered and half-defaced words we find remaining on those mildewed walls, or to discover the mind of the wretched captive who left them there for us to decipher. All that survives of the life of him who shed terror and despair over so many hearths—of him "qui res humanus miscuit olim"—is summed up in the broken, meaningless lines we find occupying

different spots on these massive and sullen walls. The most legible are, perhaps, that on the vaulted roof, as follows:—

"Costvi . qvi . net . pas . contan . . . ."

and that below the lintel of the door—

"A . qoi . ne . creut . fortone . net . pas . bien . saige."

Louis XII. resolved never to release his dangerous prisoner, but was yet unwilling to restrict him to his subterranean confinement; perhaps he remembered his own *encagement* at Bourges. At all events, during the year 1509 Lodovico was transferred from his living grave to a strongly-barred chamber on the summit of the tower;* and a few months before his death the king even accorded him the liberty of taking exercise about the grounds of the château, provided he did not exceed a distance of five leagues, and remained under the surveillance of his Scotch guards. The walls of this second prison bear upon them the melancholy records of the Maure's captivity. Among some which have been deciphered by M. Baillargé, we find the following:—

"Qvi . vevlt . tver . son . chien . on . lvi . mit . en .
. Du . estre en rage .
Ainsi . estre . De . la . povre . personne .
Qve . on . vevlt . haïr."

But even Lodovico's *cachot*, dismal as it is, does not represent the full extent of Louis XI.'s savage and revengeful despotism; the dungeons of *his* creation are still further below the hum of men than even this. We pursue our downward course, and passing empty cells, within which the fungus teems in spontaneous birth, we enter vaults whence the light is utterly excluded, and within which the air is foul and pestiferous; we are within chambers hollowed out of the very bowels of the

* This tower existed till 1815.

earth—the *oubliettes* of that implacable tyrant whom nought but blood would appease. If we raise our eyes, we see above us those treacherous trap-doors through which the unsuspecting victim in whose path they lay, was precipitated down these ominous wells, and often died the most frightful and lingering of deaths, surrounded by the mouldering remains of those who had preceded him—bleeding, gasping, and bruised by his fall, wounded by the sharp blades on which he was thrown, and surviving to add the horrors of starvation, and the frightful certainty of being for ever cut off from the rest of the world, to the desperation of his position.

Among the endless mysteries of construction with which all is surrounded here, we were shown a rough staircase hewn in the rock, communicating with a passage which leads from these underground chambers all the way to Châtillon: this is now walled up.

It is supposed that Louis XII. built that part of the château which unites the round to the square tower.

In 1512, Pierre de Navarre—originally an adventurer, but subsequently a great and brave officer—being taken prisoner at the battle of Ravenna, was confined in the Château de Loches for two years. A large ransom was demanded for him; but the courtiers of the King of Spain having blackened him in his master's estimation, he refused to contribute to his liberation, and Navarre, in order to recover his liberty, passed into the service of the King of France, then François I.

In 1524, the Bishops of Puy and Autun, and the Comte de Saint-Vallier, father of Diane de Poitiers (see Anêt), were incarcerated at Loches, in consequence of the part they had taken in the defection of Charles, Connétable de Bourbon. Hither it was, then, that hastened the beautiful Diane to bring her father's reprieve, which she had begged, pleading not in

vain, on her knees, from the generous and gallant François I. Here, therefore, it was—and in which of those repulsive cells? —that the hapless daughter, who had entered her father's prison elated with joy at the success of her pious mission, felt her filial heart sink within her at the changed aspect of the old man, whose head had grown hoary in a single night, and whose intelligence had thenceforward irrevocably fled.

In 1554, Oudard du Biez, Maréchal de France, a distinguished officer and of an illustrious house, but who met with unfortunate reverses at the siege of Montreuil, while defending it against the allied forces of England and the Low Countries, was sent into the prison of Loches by Henri II. Oudard and Vervins, his son-in-law, were tried by court-martial for their mismanagement of this affair, and were condemned to be beheaded; Vervins was executed accordingly, but the sentence of Biez was commuted by the king, who contented himself with detaining him prisoner some years. When at length released, he returned to Paris, where he died of a broken heart, at the melancholy termination of a career which had once promised to be so brilliant.

In 1588, Charles de Lorraine, Duc d'Elbœuf, was detained at Loches, and died there, under suspicion of complicity in the political plots against the government. This nobleman's son married Henriette, daughter of Henri IV. and Gabrielle d'Estrées, and has left behind him a curious character as painted by Cardinal de Retz. He says—"Il avait du cœur, parcequ'il est impossible qu'un prince de la maison de Lorraine n'en ait point; il avait tout l'esprit d'un homme qui a plus d'art que de bon sens: c'était enfin le galimathias le plus fleuri que l'on puisse s'imaginer."

Some sixty years later was carried hither François de Rochechouart, nephew of Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, one of the four

capitaines des gardes, Marquis de Chaudenier, and Chevalier de Jars. He was a Knight of Malta, Commandeur de Lagny-le-Sec, and Abbé de St. Satur. He was a distinguished man, brave to heroism, and singularly firm in character. He was continually incurring penalties for his political intrigues, and in 1633 was confined in the Bastille at the time of the detention of De Châteauneuf, *Garde des Sceaux*. Later, he was accused of endeavouring to assist the escape of the Queen-Mother and *Monsieur* into England; but although no proof of his complicity could be obtained, he was sent to Loches, and underwent a series of severe cross-examinations. Rochechouart, however, always defended himself with the same clearness, never showing the slightest embarrassment, while altogether avoiding committing any of his friends. Richelieu, who was extremely desirous of sifting to the bottom the intrigue in which he was suspected to have taken part, contrived that he should be condemned to death, pledging his word to his judges that his life should be spared. The Chevalier de Jars was accordingly sentenced to be beheaded, and his coming fate was announced to him amid the usual solemnities. He ascended the scaffold with noble resolution, and placing himself in the prescribed posture to receive the fatal blow, closed his eyes calmly upon the world. At this moment cries of "*Grâce, grâce!*" were heard, and Rochechouart was informed of the king's clemency; at the same time one of his judges, Laffemas, who was surnamed "Le Bourreau du Cardinal de Richelieu," had the meanness to exhort him to avail himself of the opportunity to declare all he knew of De Châteauneuf's guilt. He replied, with dignity, that he had no knowledge of such guilt; and that, even if he had, nothing would induce him to betray a friend. His crime, it seems, consisted in the offence he had given to the minister by his intimacy with some persons hostile

to him. The Chevalier de Jars, being liberated, went to Italy, and only returned to his own country after the death of Louis XIII.

Before we close the history of the *prison* of Loches, we will mention a popular tradition connected with it, which may be new to our readers. During the excavations making here, when some of these subterranean chambers were discovered, a Capitaine Pont-Briant, who was wandering about the place, pushed open with considerable effort a massive door, which led into one of them, when, to his amazement, he saw before him, sitting on a block of stone, a man of gigantic stature, clothed and armed after the fashion of a mediæval knight; he was in a stooping posture, and his face was buried in his hands, as if he were sleeping. The captain approached him gently, and laid his hand upon his shoulder, as if fearful of disturbing his profound rest. His caution was not misplaced, for no sooner had he touched this mysterious figure than the whole form before him yielded to the pressure, and, like some vision of enchantment, the knight disappeared and could nowhere be found, while the pieces of armour lay scattered about, splintered into fragments, and, mingled with them, three or four colossal bones. Beside the figure was found a small trunk filled with very fine linen, which it was hoped might on examination bear some mark which should throw light on the strange discovery, but on conveying it into the open air it crumbled away to powder!

So much for the severe side of the history of Loches. Other portions of this vast edifice formed the palace proper, and witnessed the gay doings of successive courts. We have already traced its annals as the residence of kings, until the time of Louis XI., who made it more of a prison than a palace; and of Louis XII., who continued there the work begun by his predecessor. It remains for us to tell how magnificently that

most magnificent prince, François I., who did everything so nobly, received here, on the 12th December, 1539, his royal guest, rival, and quondam enemy, Charles Quint. Great were the festivities with which François celebrated the visit of his royal brother; banquets and hunting parties were the order of the day. François went in person to meet him, accompanied by his second queen, Eléonore, and followed by all his court. Tournaments and sham fights gave their splendour to the occasion; and Charles was as much impressed with the wealth and grandeur of his host at his Château of Loches, as he afterwards was with those at Chenonceaux and Amboise.

The next time the court resided at Loches was in 1559, when Henri II. and Catherine de Medicis visited this fine old château. In 1571 Charles IX. passed a few days at Loches in company with Henri de Bourbon; and Henri III., while still Dauphin, halted there some days when going to put himself at the head of the army collected in its environs to fight at Moncontour, where he was victorious. Henri IV. was once at Loches after he became king; and after his death the queen regent, Marie de Medicis, appeared there, but not surrounded by a court. It was in 1619, on the 23rd February, the Duc d'Epernon being Governor of Loches, that the former Queen of France took up her abode in the château, at once a palace and a prison. But she was there under the auspices of d'Epernon, who was a loyal subject, and had been devoted to Henri IV. before the knife of Ravaillac had made his wife a widow, though Henri did not at once discern his worth, and was slow to accord him his confidence. This prince even went so far as to say to him reproachfully, one day, when displeased, that "he had no friendship for him." The duke answered with calmness and dignity. "Sire," said he, "your majesty has no more faithful servant than myself. I would die sooner than be

untrue to the smallest of my duties; but as regards friendship, your majesty knows better than I do, that is only to be purchased by friendship."

After the unexpected death of the king, d'Epernon gave his zealous services to the party of the queen regent, and on her being banished to the Château de Blois; it was he who assisted her to escape, and received her at Loches, of which he was governor, transferring her thence to his own territory at Angoulême, and treating her as one sovereign treats another sovereign when in exile.

We subjoin here a singular episode in the life of the Duc d'Epernon, because it is a curious picture of the times. It arose out of an affray between him and Mgr. Sourdis, Archbishop of Bordeaux, the consequences of which embittered his old age. Both were extremely touchy in disposition, and jealous of the prerogatives attached to their respective positions. After a great many minor disputes, the duke—quite as proud as, but more enterprising than, the archbishop—meeting his carriage one day, ordered it to be stopped by his guards, to make way for *him*. The prelate immediately alighted, but excommunicated the guards on the spot. He then convened at his palace a meeting of the principal ecclesiastics of the town, to consider what means could be taken to fulminate his censures on his rival. D'Epernon, less alarmed than irritated by this assembly, ordered the archiepiscopal dwelling to be surrounded, in order to prevent the meeting. The archbishop, perceiving the manœuvre, and fearing his projects would be nullified, appeared in the portico, exclaiming, "A moi—à moi, mon peuple! on fait violence à l'Eglise." D'Epernon rushed towards the archbishop on this, and dealing him several blows with his closed fist, knocked his hat off with his cane. The archbishop during this attack remained perfectly self-possessed, and irritated

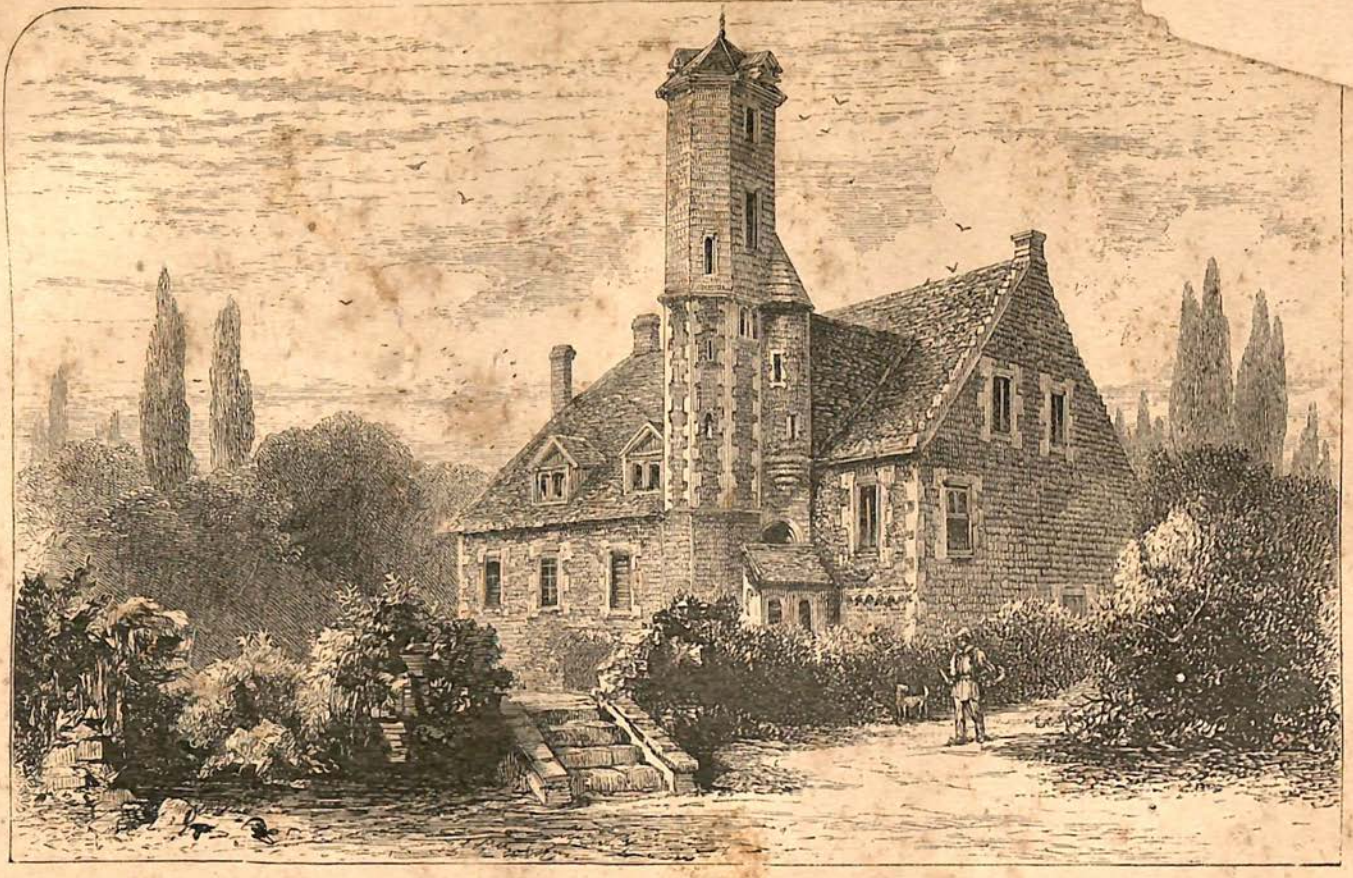
his spirited opponent still more, by calling out in the hearing of all present—"Frappe, frappe, tyran! Tes coups sont des fleurs pour moi! Je te déclare dès cette heure excommunié!" No sooner were the details of this dispute known at court than d'Epernon was stripped of all his charges until the ban should be removed. His friends afterwards obtained a revocation of the anathema, but on very severe conditions. D'Epernon died at Loches on the 10th of January, 1642, at the age of eighty-eight.

The Duc d'Epernon was lofty in his ideas, and some of his measures savoured of presumption. He was the first subject who ever drove with six horses to his carriage. His line came to an end in the person of his son Bernard, who died in 1661.

From this date, Loches ceases to offer a history of its own, and we can find no events of interest connected with its fabric, which, no longer noticed, suffers the melancholy consequences of abandonment and neglect. Silent and disused, its vast chambers and its narrow cells are alike falling to decay; its fountains have ceased to flow, its terraces are moss-grown, and its gardens have run to waste; silence and solitude have asserted their sway, and the glory of Loches is a vision of the past.

PLESSIS-LES-TOURS.

Arrival at Tours—Take Rooms in the Rue Royale—The Bridge; said to be the finest in Europe—Fair in the Old Town—Cathedral of St. Gatien; its History its Beauty, Monuments, Spiral Staircase—Desecrated Churches in Tours—Tower of Charlemagne—Church of St. Clement; of St. Julien—Walk to Plessis; cross the Loire on foot—Our Disappointment on beholding the Ruins of the Château—Remains of the Foundations and Walls—Iron Cage—La Balue; his History—Plessis under Louis XI.—Charles the Bold—Count René's Victory—Angelo Cattho's Prediction—De Commines' Account of Louis's first Paralytic Seizure in 1480—Edward IV.—Louis's Policy—De Commines and Langlet describe Louis's second Attack in 1481; his Conduct during and after this Illness—De Commines' Weakness for the King's Faults—Jacques Coctier, the King's Doctor—Louis's Terror of Death; his Suspicions of those about him; his Self-Imprisonment—Briefs obtained from the Pope by Louis, in 1483, to insure the intercession of St. François de Paule—Application to the Monks of St. Rémy for the "Sainte Ampoule;" their refusal: Louis obtains an Order for it from Rome—Various other Relics sent for by Royal Command—Embassy from Bajazet, with a Bribe in the form of Pious Relics—Louis sends for the Dauphin—Plots against the King—Louis has a third Attack in 1483; sends for St. François de Paule; makes conditional vows to Notre Dame de Cléry, and all the Saints; prepares his Tomb; characteristic Conduct on his Death-bed; his Character—Plessis under Louis XII.; the title of "Père du Peuple" conferred on him there—Plessis under Charles IX.; Festivities to celebrate the Victory of La Charité—Plessis under Henri III.; Royal Meeting described by Palma Cayet—In 1778, Plessis, a ruin, made to serve as a House of Correction; demolished at the Revolution.



PLESSIS-LES-TOURS.

PLESSIS-LES-TOURS.

"Sub rupe sinistrâ
Mœnia lata vidit, triplici circumdata muro."
Æneid.

PLESSIS-LES-TOURS, or Plessis-du-Parc, owes so much of its celebrity to the picture—truthful or imaginary—given of it by the author of "Quentin Durward," that we can imagine few to have perused that production without sharing the desire with which it inspired us, to know the actual condition of that legendary old château. We confess to the weakness of having been first induced to pay a visit to the castles of the Loire by our eager interest in the spot there so minutely and so delightfully described. Possibly that description may be considered exhaustive, and, as a poem, we recognise the superfluity of an additional line; in a historical sense, however, there is still a great deal to be said about Plessis.

Arrived at Tours, we had taken up our quarters in the magnificent Rue Royale, not far from the bridge—said to be the finest in Europe—which spans the Loire. The situation was pleasant and lively, and we purposed thence to make numerous excursions both within and without the ancient city—to visit its institutions, its Hôtel de Ville, its famed library, its desecrated churches, its fine cathedral, and public edifices—in short, to explore it conscientiously, and also to examine the various attractions in its neighbourhood, first and foremost of which, in our intention, stood the ancient palace of Plessis-les-Tours.

It was the beginning of August, and the heat of the weather

was somewhat exaggerated, even for those who love a genial clime. The Loire, when full, a majestic river here, and often the cause of the most appalling disasters by overflowing its banks, no longer rolled between them: its bed was literally dry—so dry, that we were able more than once to walk across to the opposite strand in defiance of the bridge.

We soon discovered that Tours was holding a fair, and a fair apparently of serious proportions, for it lasted during the whole of our stay, and its greatest attraction was a *cirque*. We were constantly meeting a gay procession of piebalds and greys in gaudy trappings, accompanied by mounted grooms in tinsel, and equestrian dames in velvet riding-habits, with a gilt chariot bearing slightly-dressed nymphs; while from early morn to dusky eve our ears were deafened with the continual *faux bourdon* of a distant drum which never seemed to require rest.

On Sunday these gaieties were at their zenith, and the drum did duty more pertinaciously than ever: the only difference we could perceive in the proceedings on that day, was, that there were a considerably larger number of idlers, while the amusements were varied for the occasion, the feats of horsemanship being suspended for an entertainment more appropriate to the day. The huge "Cirque-Butor" was then used for the exhibition of "Les Enfans Courageux," whose performances were placarded on large illustrated bills all over the town. This entertainment was characteristic of a Catholic population, and consisted of the representation of a series of *tableaux vivants*, or rather *poses plastiques*, executed with wonderful skill and precision, as well as with a still more wonderful appreciation of art, by boys and girls all under thirteen years of age. The subjects were all taken from Scripture, and the children who rendered them were habited in a perfectly white *maillot*, and represented partially nude as well as draped figures, which, when grouped,

presented a surprisingly statuesque appearance. The hair was concealed beneath stiff white movable *chevelures*, varied in form as occasion required. The first series was taken from the Old Testament, and described the history of our first parents, down to the murder of Abel; the second was the history of the Crucifixion as detailed in the "Twelve Stations," but in these the performers were costumed with much accuracy, and in bright colours. Each *tableau* was announced by a stanza of four lines, spouted by a little fellow of four or five years old, who appeared on the stage previous to the rising of the curtain, for each scene: he rolled his "r"s and repeated his little verse with a distinctness of enunciation worthy of all praise, and always suited some little action to the words with an air most ludicrous in so tiny a creature, retiring with a half serious, half facetious bow. The curtain then went up, and the circular green board, on which were grouped the motionless performers, was turned round slowly on a pivot, the children maintaining the while a stillness perfectly astonishing. The rapidity with which they changed their dress and assumed a new position was equally extraordinary: the metamorphosis was effected in less than three minutes. This dramatic exhibition was repeated at intervals during the whole day, and each announcement attracted an overflowing audience. The surrounding booths were of the ordinary calibre, and although the long days, and tolerably early closing hours, did not require the additional attraction of lights, still the fair was an incident in the quiet habits of the old provincial city, and seemed to be appreciated by the usually tranquil inhabitants.

We had arrived late on Saturday night, and our time on Sunday was pretty well filled up with the services, our visits to the cathedral and other churches, and our loiterings about the fair, where we observed many *études de mœurs* which in-

terested us. The extreme heat of the weather rather militated against any great amount of out-door exercise, and rendered shelter very desirable during the greater part of the day. Under these circumstances, having attended an imposing mass in the Cathedral of St. Gatien, formerly known under the dedication of St. Maurice, we lingered a considerable time within its interesting precincts to examine it in detail.

The Cathedral of Tours, originally built by St. Lidoire, was burnt down and reconstructed by St. Gregory of Tours; having been again destroyed by fire in 1166, during the reign of Louis VII., its second reconstruction was begun in 1170 by Archbishop Joscion, and lasted no less than 377 years; for it was only completed in 1547. Hence the popular saying in Touraine, "Interminable comme l'œuvre de St. Maurice." The lady-chapel and fourteen other chapels of the apse, the sanctuary, and the choir, were finished in 1260; the transept, the first two arches of the nave, up to the height of the galleries, not until 1300; the north tower dates from 1507, that of the south from 1547: so that this fabric affords specimens of every style of mediæval architecture. The *façade* is strikingly rich and handsome, the towers, respectively 69 and 70 feet high, exhibit a workmanship, the elaborate delicacy of which recalls the finest lace-work. It is said that when, in 1602, Henri IV. visited Tours, he stood transfixed with admiration gazing upon this beautiful *façade:* at length, pointing at the towers, he exclaimed, "Voilà deux beaux bijoux; il n'y manque que les écrins!" Below the magnificent wheel-window, glazed with fifteenth-century glass, the principal doorway has niches for six-and-thirty statuettes. These were not long since restored; but those of the side doors have never recovered the mutilations of revolutionary times. There are many points of great beauty to be noticed in this church,

especially the apse between the buttresses which surround it; but its chief attraction consists in the harmony of its proportions, which may be said to compensate for a want of vastness in dimensions. There is scarcely a point from which this does not tell, and the general effect is always admirable, whence-soever the spectator may view this fine interior.

There are here some interesting sepulchral memorials. Among others, in the transept chapel nearest the organ, is that of the two infant princes, sons of Charles VIII. and Anne de Bretagne, who died between 1494 and 1497. The monument which marks the place of burial of these two successive dauphins is of white marble: it is carefully sculptured and in good preservation, and was moved hither from the church of St. Martin de Tours, in the choir of which it was originally placed. The princes are represented in effigy on the sarcophagus, and angels kneel beside them; the arms of France, surrounded by dolphins, enrich the sides, and are separated by bas-reliefs; the whole is in Renaissance taste, and was executed by two brothers Lejuste, contemporary sculptors of some celebrity, and natives of Tours.

There are here the tombs of three archbishops of Tours; but the greatest curiosity of the cathedral is the "Escalier Royal," in the north tower, a marvel of grace, elegance, and architectural boldness; it is of altogether unique design, and it is a mystery how the tower has resisted the weight of this extraordinary structure which exerts an incredible leverage upon it. The staircase is of stone, spiral in form, completely isolated, and what the French call *à jour;* it was added in the fifteenth century, and has been the admiration of all who have examined it. The view from the summit of this tower is fine, as well as most interesting.

It is sad to see here the number of churches desecrated by

revolutionary fury, and still remaining in their devastated condition, attesting to the savagery of that lawless period, and betraying a want of fervour on the part of the succeeding generation, which might have been expected ere now to restore them. Some, it is true, have been once more brought back to their original use, while others are yet allowed to serve the secular purposes to which they were then consigned.

The Tower of Charlemagne, supposed to have been built over the remains of one of his queens, and originally forming a portion of the church of St. Martin, is the only fragment now remaining of that edifice.

The château is almost entirely destroyed, although only a twelfth-century building. What remains of it is now a cavalry barrack. Henry II. of England was its founder. The sole tower that survives is said to be that in which was confined Henri de Guise, surnamed the Balafré.

The church of St. Clement is a fine architectural study, and is replete with memorials of its founder, Jean Briçonnet, first mayor of Tours. It contains some most exquisite specimens of rare and delicate stone carving, and is altogether valuable as a sample of fifteenth century architecture.

Close by our place of residence, in the Rue Royale, stood the now restored church of St. Julien. Its abbey was founded by Clovis, in 510, as a thank-offering for his victory over the Visigoths. It was at first a mere chapel, erected to mark the place where his horse stood when he made his thanksgiving, accompanied by a vow thus to consecrate the auspicious spot. After many alterations and additions, demolitions and restorations, it was finally replaced by the monastery of St. Julien in 1230. This abbey, with its church, was laid waste at the Revolution, and having been sold to an inn-keeper, was perverted into an hotel, which retained the name of the saint

to whom the church was dedicated. The south aisle was used as stables, and the chapels formed stalls for horses. In 1845 it was bought by the town. This abbey must originally have been very wealthy, for it was very extensive; but having been considerably damaged by the Huguenots, in 1562, the community was not rich enough to restore it, so that when the Revolution came, it found but few monks, and little more of the fabric to destroy. On the land that was originally the property of the abbey—once a small town—now stand a considerable part of the Rue Royale and the Rue Colbert, as well as the fine Hôtel de Ville, built in 1777, and the museum—one on either side the bridge at the extremity of the Rue Royale.

Early in the morning, while the weather was comparatively cool, we started for the domain of Plessis, a walk of not quite two miles. We met "peasant-girls with deep blue eyes," carrying baskets of superb ripe fruit into the Tours market; it was an exceptional year for orchard produce, and greengages and apricots, figs and plums, such as these we rarely, if ever, see in England. We soon came to the Hôpital Général, in the commune La Riche, between the Loire and Cher, and were told that ten minutes' walk would bring us to the *château* of Plessis, so often constructed by us in imagination, and which we were at last about to see, and to compare with the picture our mind had accustomed itself to assimilate with the name. We had followed the road indicated, and the allotted time had expired, so that we naturally began to look about us for the object of our search; nought, however, presented itself to our view but a tumble-down, red-brick house, with stone quoins, from the centre of which issued a turret, truncated in its proportions, but from the demolished summit of which issued a simply-built stone shot-tower. Over the crazy door was affixed a small dilapidated board, on which we read, coarsely painted, "Maison

à louer ou à vendre présentement." The door was shut, and, as far as we could judge from the road, no signs of life announced the existence of any living creature within. We stood outside the broken stone wall which partially enclosed this shabby and by no means prepossessing dwelling-place (no wonder it was "à louer ou à vendre"), when, looking down the road, we saw a peasant fellow approaching us, driving before him a couple of those lean, flattened, long-legged, flap-eared, slovenly French pigs, whose nationality is so peculiarly distinctive. We hailed the man, and inquired how far we still were from the "*Château* de Plessis-les-Tours." The *bonhomme* opened his eyes wide, and stared first at us and then in the direction of the *masure* we have described; then raising his stick and pointing to it—"Est-ce ben après c't'endroit-là que vous demandez ?" said he. It was now *our* turn to stare, and no doubt we fulfilled our part, for he at last apprehended our astonishment. "Ah ! c'est que vous n'êtes pas du pays, vous autres. Comment vous ne savez donc pas que v'là le château que vous cherchez ?" "Ah, par exemple !" was all we could reply to this incredible announcement. So *that* was all that we had come to see, and Scott's magnificent château was only a "castle in the air" after all ! Surprise and disappointment almost took away our breath, so entirely had the intelligence absorbed us, and when we recovered ourselves sufficiently to remember we had not thanked our informant, we found he and his pigs had philosophically left us to our lucubrations, and were pursuing their way in tranquil indifference to the state of mind into which he had thrown us.

An opening in the outermost of the once triple walls, no longer protected even by the gate, the posts of which alone remained, seemed to invite us to ascend the three dilapidated stone steps which gave access to the wilderness wherein stood these mournful-looking *débris:* having performed the pil-

grimage, we considered it a part of our duty to pocket the humiliation and make the best of our bargain; we accordingly accepted the sulky summons, and approached the house. As we neared the entrance an unwelcoming yapping proceeded from within, and a little starveling cur came running out to offer us a forbidding reception. He was followed by an old woman, whose features and costume were altogether *de circonstance*, the expression of her face being by no means prepossessing, and it was evident she thought herself hardly used by the neglect of Tours tourists, who, it appears, rarely visit Plessis. Our intimation that we wished for her information as regarded all she could either tell or show us of the place seemed to reconcile her for the moment to her species, to whom, in general, she appeared to owe a serious grudge.

The house had little to boast, and might be the remains of almost any imaginable building. As for a castle or a palace, it is inconceivable how it could ever have formed any part of either. The principal room resembles now a farm-house kitchen, only much less comfortable, and in the others we entered, we could discover nothing but lumber. We ascended the shattered tower, and discovered on the broken walls of the spiral staircase, some remains of sculptured arabesque mouldings and cornices, which no doubt had a history, had there been any one to tell it. This inspection was soon completed, and we then scoured the grounds, where we found distinct traces of the foundations, and could arrive at some judgment as to the fabulous extent of this formidable palace, constructed by a monarch, on principles of the sternest mistrust, to protect himself from his subjects, on whose love he was conscious he had no claim. As for the detail, whether of the threefold fortifications by which it was surrounded, with their man-traps, and spikes, and gratings, their port-holes and their sentry-boxes,

their trap-doors and their surprises, or the interior arrangement of the gilded prison in which Louis confined himself—all is left entirely to the imagination.

In one corner of the garden, not far from the house, is what may be called not only an "*In memoriam*" of this detested sovereign, but an "*In terrorem,*" in the remains of one of those places of terrible punishment in which those who affronted his majesty were wont to expiate their mistake. Pursuing our way towards it, we came to a small, shabby, modern arbour, covering an entrance to a subterranean flight of sixteen rugged stairs. These we descended, and found ourselves in a chamber or vault of most uninviting appearance, with an earthy smell, and very imperfectly lighted. A grated door closes the entrance, and an inscription, the veracity of which there is reason to doubt, informed us that Cardinal de la Balue was confined within these gloomy walls from 1473 to 1482. History, on the other hand—but history is not *always* veracious—would have us believe that that unprincipled and mischievous personage, the inventor and victim of iron cages, passed those eleven years of his unhallowed life, by retributive justice, in one of those very iron cages he invented, and which is now exhibited at Loches. Some histories assert that he died in this miserable captivity, others that he obtained his liberty in 1480, and De Commines attributes his deliverance to the king's alarm when, after his first paralytic attack, he imagined himself to be *in extremis.* "Dès que Loys se trouva mieuex," says this quaint old writer, "il délivra le Cardinal Balue qu'il avait tenu quatorze ans prisonnier, et maintesfois en avait esté requis du siége apostolique et d'ailleurs: et s'en feit absouldre d'ung bref envoyé par nostre sainct père le Pape à sa requeste."

According to Brantôme's account of La Balue his first advance-

ment was to the post of valet to the Bishop of Angers of the house of Beauveau. He gradually rose while in this prelate's service, and, at length, he gave him to the king, Louis XI., who appreciated what Brantôme styles "des gens subelins d'esprit;" and being pleased with La Balue, he first made him Bishop of Evreux, after which he became cardinal; but, elevated to this pinnacle of greatness, like so many others, he ungratefully forgot his low origin, and disregarding all considerations of religion and principles of honour, he maligned his first master and benefactor to the king, who, unfortunately, gave credit too lightly to his words, so that by his false insinuations he succeeded in persuading the king that the bishop was no longer worthy of his office, which he thus soon after obtained for himself. But he did not stop here, and, being hardened by success, he next became treacherous and unfaithful to the king himself, entertaining a secret understanding with the Duke of Burgundy and others of the king's enemies, which the king at length discovered, and being enraged with him for his falsehoods, he determined to punish him, as we have seen, with the extremest rigour.

Other accounts of this *parvenu* prelate speak equally unfavourably of him. Garnier, who continued the history of Louis XI. begun by Villaret, thus tells his history:—"During the siege of Paris appeared La Balue, one of those phenomena of fortune of whom all ages afford certain specimens. He was the son of a tailor of Verdun, and grandson of a miller of Poitou. A monk having noticed him, was struck with his intelligence, and taught him the rudiments of Latin. He subsequently followed the sacerdotal career, and was received into the house of Juvenal des Ursins, Patriarch of Antioch and Bishop of Poitiers, who had so much confidence in him that he appointed him his testamentary executor—an office of which he is said to have

taken most dishonest advantage. He was next patronised by Jean de Beauvais, Bishop of Angers, who loaded him with favours, which were subsequently repaid with the basest ingratitude. La Balue contrived to insinuate himself into the favour of Charles de Melun, at that time a confidential adviser of Louis XI. This prelate little knew what a serpent he was harbouring. He introduced La Balue to the king, who was in his turn fascinated by him, made him *conseiller au parlement*, and finally (after disgracing, at his instigation, his former patron, Charles de Melun) appointed him Bishop of Evreux in his place.

Villaret has thus drawn his character:—"Il était avare, fourbe, sans mœurs, vindicatif, ingrat, avec un front d'airain. C'était un titre pour mériter sa haine que d'avoir été son bienfaiteur; capable des plus noires perfidies sous le masque du zèle et du dévouement, ne reconnoissant ni patrie, ni réligion, ni roi; immolant tout à son intérêt et à ses plaisirs, audessous de la honte des scrupules et des remords. Il affectait tous les genres de mérite; revêtu d'une cuirasse, il portait l'encensoir; on l'a vu faire la revue de la milice bourgeoise en rochet et en camoil, monter la garde à la tête des hommes d'armes au son des trompettes et des instrumens de musique."

Chabannes, Comte de Dammartin, seeing him one day, while Bishop of Evreux, in this disguise, said to the king, "Sir, your majesty should send me to Evreux to examine clerks and confer orders."

"Why?" inquired the king.

"Because," replied Chabannes, "I might as well fulfil the functions of bishop, whilst La Balue is doing my work and reviewing your troops."

The king smiled. "No matter," said he; "c'est un bon diable d'Evêque, pour le moment,—what may *become* of him remains to be seen."

It remained to be *felt,* too, as Louis afterwards found to his cost.

At a little distance from the cage of La Balue is another portion of an old house now known by the name of "La Rabaterie." This, the old woman informed us, was once the dwelling-place of Olivier-le-Dain, barber, prime minister, ambassador, and *bourreau* to Louis XI. His functions were tolerably heterogeneous, and he cannot be said to have acquitted himself equally well in all.

In January, 1476, Louis undertook a pious pilgrimage from Plessis-les-Tours to Notre Dame du Puys, in Anjou, on the occasion of the death of his mortal enemy, Charles le Téméraire; he also presented a silver railing to the church of St. Martin de Tours to surround the tomb of that saint, in thanksgiving for the riddance he had experienced. He signalised his joy with the most indecent display, by giving a costly banquet at Plessis to the officers of his household, and announcing the event by circular letters written in his own hand to the principal cities in his kingdom and to foreign potentates.

The circumstances of the duke's death are very dramatic. The immediate cause of his ruin was the siege of Nancy, and General as he was, it is wonderful that he should have undertaken so desperate a measure; he was, however, driven to desperation by two recent defeats, the latter being the loss of the battle of Morat. Charles's impetuous nature and indomitable will are well known; after this last reverse he seems to have abandoned all control over himself; he refused to have his hair, beard, or nails cut, or to change his clothes; he wrote to the seigneurs of his states to supply him with money and men, summoning them in a tone which he had never before employed, but they knowing him to be in misfortune were indifferent as to complying. In the very depth of one of the severest winters,

with an army enfeebled by two successive defeats, he proceeded to besiege Nancy, and had the trenches opened. The inhabitants defended their city with desperation, suffering patiently the extremest rigours of hunger and privation, thus giving Réné time to assemble a sufficiently powerful army.

On the 5th January, in the midst of the bleakest winds and a storm of snow, Charles opened his attack. It was in vain that his officers represented to him the insanity of his attempt; deaf to the voice of reason, he madly rushed on to his destruction. The enemy's forces were double his own in number, when in the midst of his difficulties Campobasso, one of his generals, who had most strongly urged him to the act, suddenly forsook the cause, carrying off with him the men under his command, and went over to his opponents, who, however, refused to receive a traitor into their ranks. The catastrophe was not long in following; the horses, unable to keep their feet on the frozen ground, fell and crushed their riders beneath them; these latter, heavily armed, and unable to rise, were cruelly trampled to death as they lay bruised and helpless. The duke fought like a hero, and kept up the courage of the few who surrounded him, but his bravery was thrown away, some of his adherents perished in defending him, the rest were taken prisoners.

The young Count Réné entered his *bonne ville de Nancy* cheered by the acclamations of the people. A triumphal arch was erected in haste: it was composed of the bones of horses, asses, cats, dogs, and rats, on which the people had fed during the siege—"perhaps at once the most horrible and the most touching spectacle that a people could place before the eyes of a sovereign."

The duke's fate remained uncertain during one day; the most general report was that he had fled, but Campobasso

knew better. Among the prisoners taken was a young page who had seen his master receive the fatal blow; René sent for him and desired him to conduct him to the spot where the duke fell. The body was found embedded in the ice, and so disfigured as to be hardly recognisable; the scar, however, of the wound he had received at Montlhéri left no doubt of his identity. The Lorraine prince honoured his great and valiant enemy with magnificent obsequies, and it was observed that he assisted at them, wearing a long golden beard, after the manner of the ancient warriors when they had gained a victory. On approaching the bed of state on which reposed the corpse of Charles the Bold, the tears started to René's eyes; he took the stiffened hand in his, and said, "Beau cousin, votre âme ait Dieu en sa bonne garde, vous nous avez faict moult maulx et douleurs."

Louis XI. was at Plessis, impatiently awaiting the result of the encounter at Nancy; he was too experienced a man-at-arms not to know what must be the consequence of the duke's reckless proceeding, and could have had very little doubt that if his foe were not killed, he would at all events be rendered powerless against himself for the future. On the morning of the 5th January, Louis attended mass at the church of St. Martin de Tours; Angelo Cattho, his chaplain, afterwards Archbishop of Vienne, in Dauphiné, was saying mass; on presenting the paten to the king to kiss, he said to him, "Consummatum est!" thereby announcing to him the destruction of the Burgundian forces and the duke's death. Cattho had a reputation for being able to predict future events, and his presentiment on this occasion was justified.

In the year 1480, says De Commines, in the month of March, when the king "déjà commençoit a viellir et devenir mallade, et estant aux Forges près de Chinon à son disner, luy vint

comme une percucion et perdit la parolle." It is curious that Langlet describes the same indisposition of the king's, and fixes the same date, but speaks of it as happening "en son hostel du Plessis du Parc des Tours," where he says Louis "fust merveilleusement malade d'une maladie qui soubdainement le prit, dont fust en grand danger de mort." De Commines goes into very minute detail, and describes how the king was removed from table and placed near a fire, with all the windows closed. "'Il perdit de tous poincts la parolle, et toute congnoissance et mémoire.' Monseigneur de Vienne, at that time his physician, soon arrived, who ordered all the windows to be opened and air to be given him, when he recovered his speech and consciousness, but very partially. He made signs for what he wanted, and among other requests desired that *l'official de Tours* might be sent for, that he might confess; and sent also for me (De Commines), for I was at Argenton, about ten leagues off. When I arrived," he continues, "I found him at table, and with him Maistre Adam Fumée, who had formerly been physician to his father, Charles VII., and another doctor, Maistre Claude de Mollins. He understood very little of what was said to him, but did not suffer. He made signs that I was to sleep in his room; he scarcely formed any words. I served him in this way for a fortnight, acting as '*varlet de chambre;*' 'que je tenoye à grant honneur, et y estoye bien tenu.' At the end of two or three days his speech began to return, and he became more sensible; but he fancied that no one understood him so well as myself, for which reason he would have me always about him, and even confessed himself to the said *official*, in my presence, for otherwise he could not have made himself understood. But he had not much to confess," adds the indulgent chronicler, "for he had confessed only a few days previously, seeing that when the kings of France touched for

the evil, they preceded this ceremony by confession; besides which, our king never missed weekly confession;" and he observes, "Si aultres ne le font, ils font très mal, car tousjours y a largement mallades."

"As soon as he found himself a little better, Louis began to inquire who were those who had held him by force, during the time he was unconscious of his actions, and on being informed, he incontinently discharged them out of his household; from some he took their employments, and others he refused ever again to see; from others, as Monseigneur de Segre, and Gilbert de Grassoy, Seigneur de Champeroux, he withdrew nothing, but sent them away. Many were taken aback by this fancy, regarding it as an injustice, saying they had done it for the best, which was true enough, but the imaginations of princes are various, and are often misunderstood; there was nothing of which the king was so tenacious as his authority, and he could not endure to be disobeyed in the least thing. As soon as these dismissals were arranged he began to busy himself about the council that had been held, and the despatches that had been sent during the ten or twelve days that he had been ill; with the supervision of these he had charged the Bishop of Alby, his brother, the Governor of Burgundy, the Maréchal de Gié, and the Seigneur de Lude, for all these were about him at the time of his seizure, and were all lodged in little *chambrettes* beneath his room; and he desired to see all letters which had arrived, and continued to arrive every hour. The principal of these were brought, and I read them to him. He pretended to understand them, and took them in his hand and made believe he read them, although he did not really take in their sense, nor did he know what he was saying in the replies he notified. It was embarrassing to know what to do, in the uncertainty of how this sickness would terminate, for Louis

was not a master with whom it would do to trifle. At the end of about a fortnight he returned to a less alarming state, but he was still very weak, and there appeared great reason to apprehend a relapse; the king was always reluctant to take the opinion or follow the advice of his doctors." After this Louis seems to have recovered sufficiently to take some very stringent measures in the organisation of a defensive army; for he imposed a very heavy and burdensome tax, by the advice of Monseigneur des Cordes, his lieutenant in Picardy, to enable him to maintain 20,000 infantry always on the alert, 2,500 pioneers equipped for the field, and 1,500 men-at-arms, as household troops, to be always at his orders; and for their use and occupation he ordered to be erected tents and temporary buildings on a piece of land belonging to the Duke of Burgundy, for which he paid 1,500,000 francs a year.

These warlike proceedings were so formidable that Edward IV., King of England, began to take alarm at their magnitude, and although we have no document to refer to, expressive of his apprehensions, we find among the MSS. of the time, in the Bibliothèque Impériale, an astute, autograph letter of Louis, addressed to the "Seigneur de Hasting, Grand Chambellan de sa Majesté le Roy d'Angleterre," disclaiming all hostile intentions towards that sovereign:—

"Mon bon cousin,—J'ai été adverty par anciens marchans de Normandye venans d'Angleterre, comme il a couru ung bruict par delà que j'estoys à Boulogne, et que je alloys mettre le siége à Callaix. Mon bon cousin, pour ce que la chose me touche et à mon honneur, je vous prie que vueilliez dire à monsieur mon cousin que je n'y pense oncques, ne le vouldroys faire ne souffrir toucher au moindre villaige de la terre de Callaix: et quant aucun y vouldroit entreprendre, je le vouldroys deffendre à mon povoir; et ne suys bougé du Plessis du

Parc jusques au xxvi° jour du moys de May, et m'envoys veoir mon champ auprès du Pont de l'Arche, que je n'ay encores veu, et je vous asseure que la vérité est ceste là, et ne trouvera point, monsieur mon cousin, faulte en ce que luy ay asseuré."

We have transcribed this letter because the tone of it bespeaks its thorough genuineness; never was there a letter more eminently characteristic of the man who wrote it: while, no doubt, giving a perfectly truthful explanation of a suspicious fact, it is curious to observe how it betrays the dissimulation and duplicity of his mind. The iteration with which, after making his statement, he enforces the assertion of its veracity, would never have occurred to a straightforward, single-minded man, who was accustomed to be believed on the good faith of his word, because that word was always his bond.

To return to the substance of this communication: Louis did go to inspect his new forces, established for that purpose near Pont de l'Arche, in Normandy, in a beautiful valley; it was, however, the first, last, and only time that he did see them, as says De Commines in his simple, suggestive language —"Est jamais que ceste fois ne les veit, et s'en retourna ensuite à Tours, auquel lieu luy reprint sa malladie, de rechef perdit la parolle et fut quelque deulx heures que on cuydoit qu'il fust mort, estait en une gallerie avec plusieurs, couché sur une paillasse."

Langlet likewise mentions this second attack of the king's:— "Au dit tems 1481," says he, "le Roy que avaist esté malade à Tours, s'en partit pour aller à Thouars où il devint fort mallade et y fust en grand danger de mort;" and he goes on to tell how, "in order to recover his health, he made important charitable and other foundations, and vowed, *conditionally*, great offerings in alms and subventions to ecclesiastical institutions, and founded in the Palais Royal, at Paris, a high mass to be said

there every day in honour of Monseigneur Sainct Jehan at seven o'clock in the morning, which he ordered to be sung by eight singers who were come from Provence, and who had belonged to Réné, King of Sicily. This mass was paid for with 1,000 livres parisis taken upon the dues of sea-fish sold in the *halles* at Paris."

De Commines, as usual, gives a minute account of the king's illness. "Monseigneur du Boulhaye and I," he says, "made a vow for him to Monseigneur Saint Claude, and so did likewise all the rest who were present, and incontinently his speech returned, and he rose up and walked, going about the house, but very feebly, and this second sickness took place in the year 1481, after which he travelled about as before, and came and stayed in my house at Argenton, where he remained a month, and was very ill; and thence he went to Thouars, where he continued alarmingly indisposed; but still, as soon as he was sufficiently recovered, he undertook the pilgrimage to the shrine of Sainct Claude—which had been promised on his behalf."

Then follows the narration of various other acts of the king, of active measures taken by him against certain conspiring nobles, and of his reception of an embassy from Ghent, informing him of the death of the Duchess of Austria; who, riding what Commines calls a "hobin ardant," was thrown and killed by the fall. He tells us next, that having been sent by the king on a certain mission, he was "esbahy," on his return, to find him "tant mesgre et deffaict, et m'estonnoys comme il povait aller par pays, mays son grant cueur le portaict."

In the year 1482, the king returned to Plessis, and there he shut himself up so closely that he was scarcely to be seen by any one. He knew that the hand of death had marked him, and he tried to conceal the unwelcome fact from himself by preventing others from observing it. He dreaded lest the moral

or physical weakness which he knew was creeping upon him should furnish an excuse for the withdrawal of any of that despotic authority which was as essential to him as the air he breathed. "Il entra," says De Commines, "en merveilleuse suspection de tout le monde et recula de luy toutes gens qu'il avoist accoutumez et les plus prochains qu'il eust jamais, sans cependant rien leur oster de leurs charges et offices"—for he did not want to incur their ill-will—"et feit de bien estranges choses dont ceulx qui ne le congnoissoient le tenoient à estre diminué de sens."

De Commines is wonderfully tender of Louis's character, and always contrives to put in a good word for him, when he is obliged to speak any disagreeable, or even discreditable, truth respecting him.

This morose humour growing upon the king, he was continually changing his *varlets de chambre*, as well as others who were about his person, alleging that "Nature rejoices in the constant renewal of all things." He also admitted into his intimacy men of low condition and clouded reputation, endeavouring to attach them to him by holding out hopes of aggrandisement, in which they were more likely to believe than those who had experience of court life. He gave them to understand also, that if he were once dead they would then lose all chance of fortune, which so turned out.

To his doctor, Jacques Coctier, we find, in the "Tablettes de Thémis," he gave the position of vice-president, and then *premier-président de la chambre des comptes*. The "Archives du Royaume" confirm this, and state that he married one Marguerite Le Clerc, and died in October, 1506. Coctier was a rather remarkable person, and managed the king with wonderful skill, though his principles cannot be applauded, for he took advantage of Louis's dread of death and superstitious

credulity, to gain and maintain his power over him, and often treated him with a disrespect amounting almost to brutality, while he extorted from the fears of his royal patient any advantages, pecuniary or otherwise, which he was disposed to covet. This model-physician's regular pay, independently of perquisites and presents, was 10,000 crowns per month. Sauvage says that on one occasion he got out of the king five months' pay and 4,000 crowns more, by way of a bonus—in all, 54,000 crowns: besides this, "l'Evesché d'Amyens pour son nepveu et aultres offices et terres pour luy et pour ses amys."

De Commines says that Coctier behaved towards the king with great rudeness, and goes so far as to assert "que l'on ne diroit point à ung varlet les oultraigeuses et rudes parolles qu'il luy disoit;" and so much did the king fear him, that he did not dare to dismiss him, although he occasionally ventured to whisper complaints against him behind his back. Sometimes, when he had so grossly outraged his royal patient as to fear he had provoked him into giving him his discharge, he would audaciously say, "I know that one of these days you will send me away, as you are wont to serve every one else, but, by——," using a great oath, "you will not live a week after the day I go."*

This threat, it seems, so staggered the king, that he was ready to comply with any demand, however monstrous. De

* After the death of his intimidated master, this vampire was found to have accumulated such fabulous profits that the Regent, among the earliest of her reforms, determined upon enforcing a restitution. Coctier was accordingly condemned to the payment of a fine amounting to 150,000 livres. Large as was this sum, he thought himself fortunate in escaping so cheaply, and, to avoid further inquiries, ostentatiously retired into a small dwelling, the humble character of which he hoped would secure his safety, planted an apricot tree before the door, and (exercising that description of wit deprecated by Cowley) wrote over it "à l'*abri*-Coctier."

Commines makes the best of this weakness of the king's by twisting the humiliation into a merit. He says, "Ce luy estoit ung gran purgatoir en ce monde, veu la grande obéisense et soubmission qu'il avait toujours reçeu des gens de bien et des plus grants hommes." Indeed, his memoirs of Louis XI. read like Bozzy's life of Johnson; and we doubt if, in any other biographer in the world, we could find a passage to match the following. It begins with a reluctant admission, not to say a justification, of the king's notorious cruelty, the savage ingenuity of which is its chief characteristic :—

"Il est vray," says this indulgent historian, "que Louis avoit faict de rigoureuses prisons, comme caiges de fer, et d'aultres de boys, couvertes de plaques de fer par le dehors et par le dedans, avec terribles ferrures de quelque huict pieds de large, et de la haulteur d'ung homme, et ung pied de plus. (Le premier qui les dévisa fut l'évesque de Verdun, La Balue, qui en la première qui fust faicte, fut mis incontinent, et y a couché quatorze ans.) Plusieurs l'ont mauldit"—not the king, poor innocent! who would never have thought of such a thing if it had not been put into his head—"*et moy aussi, qui en ay tasté pendant huit mois.*"

This forbearance has a touch of the sublime about it.

"Aultrefois," he proceeds, "avoit faict faire des fers très pesans et terribles pour mettre aulx pied: et estoit ung anneau pour mettre au pied seul, malaissé à ouvrir comme ung carcan, la chaine grosse et pesante, et une grosse boulle de fer au bout, beaucoup plus pesante qu'il n'estoit de raison, ne qui n'appartenoit, et les appelloit t'on les fillettes du Roy."

This is a very small portion of the list of Louis XI.'s atrocities, but the ingenuity with which his self-constituted vindicator winds up his chapter is so full of *bonhommie* and loyal logic that we cannot resist quoting it :—

"If," says he, "however, Louis imprisoned others and terrified them out of their lives, he was equally hard upon himself, for no man ever imprisoned *himself* more closely, or went in greater fear of his life (!), which I consider ought to procure him great favour hereafter, and to be considered as a large part of his purgatory undergone in advance (!!); and this I relate to show that there is no man, let him be ever so exalted, who has not to endure the sufferings of his particular condition, whether in secret or publicly. The said seigneur then, towards the close of his days, having shut himself within his house of Plessis-les-Tours, gave strict orders that no one should be permitted to enter its precincts but his domestic servants and his Scottish archers, of whom he had four hundred, who were employed in large detachments to keep watch about the place and to look out over the entrances."

"No seigneur nor person of importance lodged within this gloomy, isolated palace, and rarely did any such enter its gates —if they did they were minutely searched—for Louis suspected everybody, and no one visited the king but Monseigneur de Beaujeu, his son-in-law. All round the wall of Plessis, the king now caused to be fixed a trellis-work of stout bars of iron, and within the walls were thickly planted, but at unequal distances, iron spits having several points; these were doubled in number at the openings by which the moats might be entered. He also made four screens, of the stoutest iron, at points whence it was easy to fire from behind them,—'et estoit,'" says De Commines, "'chose bien triumphante, et cousta plus de vingt mil francs,'—and at the extremity he placed forty cross-bow men, who remained day and night, continually relieving guard, in these moats, with orders instantly to fire on any man who should be seen approaching by night, and until the gate was opened in the morning. But the fear of having

his authority tampered with, seemed to grow upon him daily; and this was not quite without foundation, for many seriously thought it would become necessary to establish a new order of things, but no one dared undertake it.

"The gate of Plessis was never opened before eight o'clock in the morning, and the drawbridge was let down at the same hour, and then the officers entered; and the guard being relieved, the archers were sent to their several posts, and the place was guarded like a frontier citadel strictly watched, and no one entered except by the *guichet*, unless it was known to the king. Is it therefore possible to keep a king more strictly imprisoned and watched than this king kept himself? It is true, that the cages in which he had confined others were only about eight feet square; but he who was so great a king only allowed himself a small court wherein to walk about, and even thither he seldom resorted, but kept mainly within a narrow gallery, only leaving it to go backwards and forwards to his chapel. Let me ask whether any of those he imprisoned were more narrowly watched, or suffered more terror as to what the end of their lives should be? And if it should be answered that his prison was more roomy than those he allowed to others, I reply, that as the prisoner was greater, so *ought* his prison to be greater in proportion." (!)

When Louis, still self-imprisoned at Plessis, was apprehending a fresh attack of his malady, he bethought himself to send into Calabria to fetch thence a holy man, whose piety and miracles were the talk of the Christian world. This saint's name was François de Paule, of blessed memory, but whom, for some reason which none seem able to fathom, De Commines persists in calling "frère Robert." This holy man had led the life of a hermit, having lived as a recluse in the cavern of a rock from the age of twelve years, and he was now forty-three

neither had he ever quitted his seclusion until the king's messenger came, fortified by an order Louis had obtained from the Pope to bid him immediately repair to the court of France.

"During the whole of this time he had abstained from flesh, fish, eggs, butter, cheese, or milk, and never had any man been known to lead so saintly a life. He had never received instruction from any human teacher, yet was he so lettered and so learned, that it seemed as if the Holy Spirit spoke by his lips. The said hermit, thus summoned, rose up and followed the king's servant and the Prince of Tarente, by whom he was accompanied, and passed through Naples, where he was met and received as if he had been a grand apostolic legate, and he was entertained by the king and his family with the greatest veneration, and replied to their attentions with the grace and ease of a man bred in courts; thence he passed on to Rome, where he was visited by all the cardinals, had several audiences of the Pope, and was seated beside his holiness in a chair of honour for three or four hours each time, answering him with so much wisdom that every one was astonished; and the holy father granted him permission to found an order, to be called the Hermits of St. François; and thence he journeyed through France till hē reached Plessis."

The king had made every preparation to receive his guest with honour, and had omitted nothing in the details of the welcome he desired to offer him. We transcribe a curious document in evidence of this, addressed as follows:—"A nostre ami et féal conseiller et général de nos finances en Languedoc, François de Génas;" and it runs thus:—"Monsieur le Général, jé vous pric de m'envoyer des citrons et des oranges douces, et des poires muscadelles et des pastenargues, et c'est pour le sainct homme qui ne mange ny chair, ny poisson; et vous me

férés ung fort grand plaisir. Ecrit à Cléry le xxix. Juin, 1483. Signé, Loys."

The king was at Plessis with a very few people about him, surrounded by his archers, and guarded as before described; and no one spoke to him of any matters except those of the extremest importance. "To any one who saw him, he appeared more dead than alive—so emaciated had he become that no one could have believed it. When he heard that the *sainct homme* had arrived, he went to meet him, receiving him as if he had been the Pope, and, kneeling before him, begged him that it would please him to prolong his life." The hermit, like Elijah of old, appears to have been shocked at the king's supposing that "he was God, to kill and make alive," and replied that he was asking of him more than lay in his power, exhorting him rather to repentance and to make his peace with God, so as to be prepared for whatever fate awaited him.

"I have often," says De Commines, "heard him speak before the king; and he spoke as one inspired by God, for, otherwise, he never could have said such things as he did say, and so much to the purpose; and so he continued to remain near the king, and, from time to time, to exhort and sustain him with spiritual consolations."

Still Louis dreaded his coming end, and his temper continued gloomy and morose. He not only feared to die, but he dreaded that others should think his power was at an end. He struggled hard for life—life at any price, but life he *must*, he *would* have. Alas! he found himself for the first time in the relentless grasp of a despot more inexorable than himself, and it was now *his* turn to surrender. He made an expiring effort to deceive himself, and, above all, the nation, and, by superhuman exertions, which only served to hasten the crisis he was so anxious to defer, bestirred himself so marvellously about public affairs, that

it was scarcely possible to believe he was so seriously ill. He carried on negotiations with England, with Spain, and gave directions which reached into the remotest provinces of France; he devised punishments and regulated pensions, he established extensive manufactories, he ordered mules and horses to be procured, describing minutely the beasts he required; sent all over the world, to purchase dogs of peculiar breeds from Spain, Brittany, Vallence, &c., mules from Sicily, horses from Naples, from Denmark and Sweden reindeer, and rare animals from all countries, for all of which he paid fabulous prices, and when all these were brought to him, he took no notice of them, his sole object being to make a stir and give an idea that he was in full enjoyment of his faculties. Besides all this, he dressed himself richly, and with extreme care, altogether contrary to his usual custom, wearing nothing but crimson velvet robes lined with costly furs.

De Commines gives us a lengthy account of the betrothal of the Dauphin, Charles VIII., with Margaret of Flanders, to the exclusion of the Princess of England, daughter of Edward IV., which he asserts was so great a disappointment to Edward that he died of grief; but, as this took place at Amboise, the recital of the incident does not belong here.

In the meantime, Louis neglected no means which his superstitious alarm led him to imagine might possibly conduce to his recovery, and, on his application to Pope Sixtus IV., he received from that pontiff two orders addressed to St. François de Paule, the one commanding him to pray day and night for the recovery of the king, by virtue of the obedience he owed to the holy see, the other menacing instant excommunication in case of refusal. These briefs were dated 11th June, 1483, and were despatched on the same day, with power to Louis to use whichever he pleased. They were accompanied by the "corporal sur

quoy chantait Monseigneur Sainct Pierre," with several other valuable relics which the king had, from pious sentiments, desired to borrow. But this was not enough, Louis wrote a humble petition, still extant, addressed to the Abbé de St. Remy, à Reims, as follows :—

"Chier et bien-aymé,—Nous voudrions bien, s'il se pouvait faire, avoire *petite goutte* de la Saincte Ampoule, et pour ce, nous vous prions que vous advisez et enquerrez s'il se pourroit faire d'en tirer ung peu de la fiole où elle est, sans péché ne danger."

But this request, modest as it was, was regarded as a desecration by the ecclesiastical authorities of Rheims, and the royal petition was negatived. On this, Louis had recourse to the papal authority, and having obtained the sanction of the Holy See, he wrote again thus to the réligieux de St. Remy :—

"Nous envoyons présentement *et de la permission de nostre Sainct Père le pape*, par devers vous, noz aimez et féaux conseillers l'Evesque de Seez, Claude de Montfaucon, Gouverneur d'Auvergne, et Jehan de Sammeville, Seigneur de la Heuze, nos chambellans, pour nous apporter le plus honnestement qu'ils pourront, la Saincte Ampoulle."

Now the "Sainte Ampoule" stood on the altar of St. Remy, at Rheims, and never as yet had been removed from its place; nevertheless, upon this summons, it was taken down and carried with much ceremony all the way from Rheims to Plessis, and was brought into the king's room and placed on his *buffet*, and stood there at the hour of his death. The king desired that it should be administered to him as at his coronation, and some even say that he purposed therewith to anoint his whole body; "but," says Commines, "this would not have been possible, the quantity being so small, for I saw it when it arrived, while it remained there, and also when the king was interred at Notre Dame de Cléry." The procession which accompanied this relic

was on a grand scale, and at every station where it halted an altar was erected. The chief halt was at the Sainte Chapelle, in Paris, and thence it was accompanied by other relics, among which was the "rod of Moses." We almost expect to find a "chip off the ladder Jacob saw in his dream."

Among the palace accounts of this date we meet with an item of eighty-five lines to one Estienne Messiat, for a journey on the 1st September, "made in great haste," to the city of Florence, to bring thence for the king some lupin seeds; and again, for another hurried mission from Tours, in the month of November, to Florence, to bring the king the ring of St. Querby. Again, by the same accounts, how, in the Bibliothèque Imperiale, we see that the king gave to Philippe Lourin 10,000 livres, borrowed from some of the principal towns in Normandy, to pay Messire George le Grec, "pour faire armer et équiper deux navires et une barque que le Roy envoya en l'Isle Vert querir aucunes choses qui touchaient le bien et *santé* de sa personne."

In the midst of this, arrived an ambassador from Bajazet, the Grand Turk, bringing to Louis a mass of relics, which he offered him on condition that he would take and retain prisoner Tizim, Bajazet's brother, but the king refused even to receive his Mussulman Excellency. Commines takes the opportunity of remarking how highly the king must have been esteemed and honoured, to be the object of so many marks of consideration as were thus heaped upon him.

On 21st September, 1482, Louis sent for the dauphin, whom he had not seen for many years, for he kept him in close seclusion in Amboise under pretence that his health required it, but really from a feeling of jealousy, and also lest, under cover of his name, a party should be formed against his own authority. He then counselled and exhorted his son with much wisdom, and from his discourse it was evident he was altogether

unaware of the secret alliance formed against him, called by the name of "Le Bien Public." Olivier de la Marche has minutely described this association, which he says consisted of more than five hundred persons, and that among their partisans they numbered princes, knights, ladies, damoiselles, and escuyers, protesting against the misgovernment of Louis, and saying it was time to reform it. Its members were known to each other by what may be termed a masonic sign, consisting of a silken *aiguillette* worn at the girdle, by which they recognised each other; "mais dont le Roy," says he, "*ne peut onques rien scavoir.*"

The "Chronique Scandaleuse" states that on Monday, 25th August, 1483, "the king became very ill in his Hostel de Montils (Plessis) les Tours, insomuch that he lost his speech; and news of the same was brought to Paris on Wednesday, 27th of the same month, with the assertion that his majesty was already dead, for so it was reported in a letter written by Maistre Jehan Briçonnet, whose name obtained credit for the report whithersoever it was carried; but this was not so, for the king came to himself again, and spoke, and ate, and lived until the Saturday night following, 30th August, rendering up his soul between six and seven o'clock that evening, and immediately was the body abandoned by those who had served him during his life."

"As soon as this last seizure came upon the king," says De Commines, "he lost his speech as before, but when it returned he found himself more feeble than he ever had been, so that he could hardly lift his hand to his mouth, and was so emaciated and depressed that every one who saw him was moved to pity; he now thought he must be going to die, and sent quickly for Monseigneur de Beaujeu, his elder daughter's husband, and ordered him to go to the king his son—for so he

called him—at Amboise; then he sent for the chancellor, and ordered him to carry the seals to the king his son; he also sent for Estienne de Vers, who had brought up the new king, and recommended him to serve him faithfully."

"Never during all his illness did he complain, as do the generality of people when they suffer, and as I myself do the same," says De Commines.

As the fatal term of the king's days approached, it would seem that the wonderful tenacity of life which he had always manifested returned in all its force, and he began once more to fix his hopes on the good hermit of Calabria, who was now established at Plessis, continually sending messages to him that it might please him to restore him to life. Frère François, however, only replied that he must make his peace with God, for there was no other hope for him; and as for Jacques Coctier, and Olivier, his barber and "executioner in ordinary," they are said to have addressed him with brutal plainness of speech, saying,—"Sire, il est tems que nous nous acquitions, n'ayez plus d'espérance en ce sainct homme ny en aultre chose, car seurement à cette heure il est faict de vous, et pour ce, pensez à votre conscience; car il n'y a nul remède." Hard words were these for a dying king, and especially for one so reluctant to die; but they were not harder than those repeated by his order to the almost countless victims of his tyrannical cruelty—often tried, condemned, and executed in a breath.* To this unwelcome

* We find a touching little narrative in Molinet's chronicles relating to the last hours of one of his prisoners, the Comte de St. Pol. The Seigneur de Gaucourt went to him in his cell, and, without preliminary, announced to him his approaching fate in the following words:—"'Je suis ici envoyé par la Court de Parlement, vous signifier la sentence, laquelle est contre vous: c'est que vous estes jugé à estre décapité et mourir *anjourd'huy* publiquement en Grève.' A ces mots, monseigneur le connétable s'escria haultement et dict: 'Mon Dieu! quelles nouvelles! vecy une dure sentence!'" Of the barbarous execution of the Duc de Nemours and cruel treatment of the Comte de Lude, we need not remind our readers.

truth, Louis replied with some asperity, "Laissez, messieurs, nous verrons cela: j'ay espérance en Dieu que il m'aydera, car par adventure, je ne suis pas si malade que vous pensez."

"Quelle douleur, néanmoins," says De Commines, "luy fust d'ouyr cette nouvelle!—for," continues he, "surely no man ever so greatly feared death, nor took so much trouble to escape it; and forasmuch as the very word 'death' caused him the greatest shock, he desired his servants and myself, as well as others, that whenever the hour of his departure should arrive and it became necessary to announce it to him, we should advertise him of the necessity of confessing and receiving the last sacraments by using the words 'Parlez peu,' by which he would understand what was meant."

Unready, however, as Louis was for death when it came, he had long contemplated it at a distance; he had even given very stringent orders as to his burial, which he particularly desired should be at Notre Dame de Cléry, and not at St. Denis. Louis had always had a peculiar devotion towards the holy patroness of this church, and, as we all know, wore a leaden representation of her in his bonnet. When the church was destroyed by fire, in 1472, he had it rebuilt, and to her altar it was that he came to express his recognition of those atrocious crimes (which he tenderly qualified as *péchés*), in order to be ready to begin a new score. Hither it was, too, that he continually resorted to coax, bribe, or threaten, according to his humour, Notre Dame de Cléry into granting him such petitions as he found it necessary to make to her. Having in 1476 experienced a wonderful recovery, at the close of a Novena to the Virgin of Cléry, he determined, as a reward, to make her shrine the place of his interment, and accordingly obtained from the Pope a bull of excommunication against whosoever should, after his death, in any way contravene his wishes in this respect.

He even ordered to be made, while he was yet living, a tomb in which he frequently laid himself—"affin de s'asseurer sy le lieu estoit juste à son corps, et bien proportionné pour le recevoyre après sa mort." A costly monument in gilt bronze was designed under the king's directions, and ordered by him to be placed over his remains: it was in process of execution at his death.*

Notwithstanding this familiarization with the final scene through which all must pass, Louis recoiled, as one beholding them for the first time, from the actual contact with the grave—a melancholy instance of the "unpreparedness of great preparation." But the foe he had now to contend with was neither to be terrified nor bribed. *He* could neither be chained, nor manacled, nor endungeoned, nor treacherously poisoned, neither could he be propitiated with prayers or cajoleries, such as he had fondly believed procured him a favourable hearing from the saints he was wont to invoke—strange and incongruous mixture as he was, of superstition and impiety. Not long before his death he sent for his confessor, and desired him to lose no time in praying for him, authorising him to promise certain gifts in his name to Notre Dame de Cléry, *provided* she

* In 1562 this work of art was destroyed by the Calvinists, but in 1622 Louis XIII. restored it, causing the same design to be reproduced in white marble by Michel Bourdin, a statuary of Orleans. La Fontaine, who visited it in 1663, has left the following characteristic description of it and of the monarch it covered:—"On le voit à genoux sur son tombeau, quatre enfans aux coins; se sont quatre anges, et ce pourraient être quatre amours, si on ne leur avait point arraché les ailes. Le bon apôtre de roi fait là le saint homme, et est bien mieux pris que quand le Bourguignon le mena à Liége.

"Je lui trouvai la mine d'un matois;
Aussi l'était ce prince, dont la vie
Doit rarement servir l'exemple aux rois,
Et pourrait être en peu de points suivie."

A ses genoux sont ses Heures, son chapelet et autres menus ustensiles, sa 'main de justice,' son sceptre, son chapeau, et sa Notre-Dame. Je ne sais comment on n'y a point introduit le prévost Tristan."

granted him what he wanted. The priest, in compliance, began his orisons, commending to heaven the body and soul of his penitent. "Que faites-vous là?" whispered Louis, with eager alarm. "Ne parlez donc que du corps; si vous demandez tant de choses à la fois, nous n'obtiendrons rien."

And so King Louis took his unwilling departure, leaving behind him perhaps one of the most equivocal pages that history discloses to us. Despotic as he was in his rule, and sanguinary in his propensities, Louis possessed a vein of humour which lightens up the gloomy recital of his "reign of terror;" and although the impression his passage has left on men's minds is darkened by prison bars, dungeon vaults, and iron cages, it is occasionally relieved by the fact that he has been known to allow himself the luxury of a benevolent action, and sometimes even condescended to joke with his alarmed captives. It is true his *jeux d'esprit* were often of a ghastly hue; but there were moments in his life when he went so far as to forgive an offence, especially if those he released were no longer dangerous. His cunning and penetration were the astonishment of all who had dealings with him. Although he cannot be said to have behaved well to his dauphiness, Marguerite d'Ecosse, or to his queen, Charlotte de Savoie, at least he did not insult them by parading mistresses at court; indeed, as regards the relaxations of life, gallantry seems to have offered him little temptation. If he was passionately fond of hunting, it was for the sake of the exhilaration of the exercise itself, and not, as was the case with François I., on account of the opportunities it gave him of cultivating the society of the sex.

However, it is not our duty to discuss the reign of this remarkable king, and we must endeavour to confine ourselves to such of its events as passed within these well-defended walls. They had little more to witness after he had passed away, who

made them what they were, to suit his—happily—singular temperament; accordingly, history scarcely recognises Plessis-les-Tours, otherwise than as the den of the royal monster who has identified himself with its repellent attributes; and, in truth, such as he had made it, it was highly undesirable that it *should* be found suited to the tastes and habits of any other monarch.

We may presume that Plessis was maintained as an official dependency of the crown, if not as a royal residence, since we find that the Etats Généraux met in its *grande salle*, and that an assembly was held there in the year 1506, to confer on Louis XII. the honourable surname of "Père du Peuple," the most endearing title in connection with the purple.

After a long interval, we arrive at the reign of Charles IX., who, on Wednesday, 15th May, 1577, celebrated a victory there by a banquet given to the Duc d'Anjou, his brother, and the lords and officers who had accompanied him to the siege and taking of La Charité. Castelnau tells us that "the ladies wore green, and some of them were habited in men's attire, while (as at the famous *festin* given by Catherine de Medicis at Chenonceaux) others of the ladies of the court wore exceedingly slight costumes, and personating the goddesses of fable, waited on the guests with dishevelled hair." Green being the colour prescribed on this occasion, 60,000 livres worth of green silk were bought up in Paris for the costumes of these divinities.

We derive from Palma Cayet a minute account of the important meeting which took place at Plessis, in 1589, between Henri III. and Henri Roi de Navarre. The interview had been arranged for Pont-la-Motte; but, on the King of Navarre arriving there at one o'clock in the afternoon, with all his troops, he found there, instead of the King of France, M. le Mareschal d'Aumont, who told him that the monarch and all the court

had repaired to Plessis, where he requested he would join them, and begged him to cross the water in barges, which had been brought from Tours for that purpose, below the faubourg of St. Symphorien. Some of the adherents of Henri of Navarre were desirous of persuading him not to cross the river, entreating him to consider that he was going to put himself, defenceless as he was, on an island between the Cher and Loire, in the power of the king. Henri, however, was not to be thus deterred, and having first sent across a considerable number of his nobles, he himself followed, with his guards, who were under the command of Le Capitaine Vignolles. Of all who attended him, no one but himself wore the cloak and *panache.* All the others had white scarfs, and he was accoutred as a soldier, his pourpoint being worn threadbare on the shoulders and sides from the friction of the cuirass. His breeches were of velvet, *couleur feuille morte,* his cloak scarlet, his hat grey felt, with a large white feather, fastened by a very handsome medal. Thus did Henri de Navarre, accompanied by MM. le Duc de Montbazon and the Maréschal d'Aumont, who had been sent to him by the King of France, arrive at the Château of Plessis. The King of France had reached it about an hour previously, with all the princes and nobles of his court, and while awaiting the arrival of the King of Navarre, had gone to the "Bons Hommes." All the nobility had assembled in the park with a multitude of persons, desirous of witnessing the interview. As soon as the King of Navarre had entered the château, his arrival was announced to his host, who immediately repaired to the spot where he was, along the *jeu de paille-maille.* At the foot of the steps, M. le Comte d'Auvergne, assisted by MM. Sourdis, de Liancourt, and other chevaliers, under the orders of the king, received him, and accompanied him to his majesty, the archers calling out, "Place! place! Voicy le Roy!" The crowd at once

made way, and as soon as the King of Navarre saw his majesty of France, he bowed, and the king came and embraced him. These embraces and salutations were repeated several times with a mutual demonstration of great satisfaction on either side. The king proposing to take a walk in the park with his brother-sovereign of Navarre, found it impossible to proceed, for the multitude of persons: for the concourse was immense, and even the trees were covered with them. On all sides no sound was heard but the universal shout of "Vive le Roi!" while some called also, "Vivent les Roys!" Thus their majesties, being unable to go either in one direction or the other, returned within the château, where the council was held, and remained there for the space of two hours. When the business was concluded, they mounted their horses, and the King of Navarre reconducted the king as far as the Pont St. Anne, about half-way from the Faubourg de la Biche, and taking leave of his majesty, he returned by passing the Loire, and went to lodge in the Faubourg St. Symphorien, in a house opposite the bridge of Tours. On the 1st May, he walked into the town at about six o'clock in the morning, and came to say "good day" to the king. All that morning was occupied in consultation and in deliberating on affairs of state, until about ten o'clock, when the king went to mass, and was accompanied to the door of the church of St. Gatien by the King of Navarre, who went thence to visit the Princes de Condé and de Comte. The afternoon was passed in "running the ring" along the walls of the park of Plessis, in which the King of Navarre and all the princes and nobles exercised themselves, whilst Henri III. was at vespers "aux Bons Hommes." Two days were devoted to this interview, during which the king resolved to collect a strong and numerous army, to go and besiege Paris.

In 1778, Plessis still existed; but every vestige of its once

royal destination had forsaken its deserted remains, as if the severity of its tyrannical creator still adhered to its stones. It was at this period converted into a house of correction; but at the Revolution even this last remnant of unenviable authority departed from it—Plessis was ignominiously demolished: its undefended battlements and unresisting walls were levelled with the ground from which they were taken, and nought remained to tell the passing traveller that on that spot once stood a "palace where a king might dwell."

CHAUMONT.

Site and early History—Description of its aspect—The Building described by M. le Vicomte Walsh; its lofty and commanding Position—Derivation of the name—Wrested by one Robber-chief from another, it remains with Comte Eudes—Claimed by the Diable de Saumur; obtained by him—Disputed under Sulpice and his Grandson—Thibault IV.; his cruel Treatment of Sulpice II.—Hugues—The Comtes d'Anjou and Touraine—Sulpice III. regains Chaumont by a Marriage—Louis de Chaumont—La Sieur de Giac—Georges, Cardinal d'Amboise—Incidents of his Life—Catherine d'Amboise; her Poems and early Death—Charles d'Amboise—Chaumont a Royal Property—The Residence of the Court under Henri II.—Catherine de Médicis—Her Preference for Chenonceaux—Catherine's Character—Her Family Affections; her Superstition—The Queen's strange Interview with Ruggieri; his Astronomical Predictions—The Magic Mirror—Catherine's dislike to Chaumont; her Disposal of it—Chaumont forced on Diane de Poitiers—Descends to the Duchesse de Valentinois—Its several Owners—Passes from the *Noblesse*—Occupied by Madame de Staël: her "*Dix ans d'Exil*"—Preference for Paris—Napoleon and Madame de Staël—Chaumont the property of M. le Vicomte Walsh; his Restorations—*Grande Galerie fleur-de-lysée*—Room of Catherine de Medicis—Catherine estimated by her Children; by her Contemporaries—Pasquinades—Lincestre's Announcement—Palma Cayet's Quotation—The Royal Tribune—Restoration of the Private Apartments—External View.

CHATEAU DE CHAUMONT.

"Where dead men
Hung their mute thoughts on the mute walls round,
I lingered."

SHELLEY.

AT about the same distance from Blois as Chambord, but to the west, and on the south side of the Loire, elevated on its rocky eminence, stands the interesting feudal castle of Chaumont, one of the most ancient among the ancient châteaux of the Loire. Built in the very earliest of those lawless times, when defence was the first consideration of the possessor, it stands reared upon a steep and well-wooded eminence: the site alone, perhaps, being all that remains to tell us what was the mind, and what may have been the history, of the primitive designer; for, of the early edifice which so many centuries ago looked grimly down on the valley of the Loire, scarcely more than the foundation stones remain, and another château, to which from time to time were added towers, and galleries, and halls, and chapel, has long since occupied that same picturesque and elevated spot. If it afforded a feudal fortress to the proud and masterful monopolizers of the soil, to us it presents a monumental record of those traditions in which we trace the history of generations that have thus communicated with us, as we, in our turn, shall communicate with posterity.

Chaumont is an interesting and suggestive, as well as a picturesque feature in the view before us, perched there on that towering height. The village nestles at its base, bathed

by the river, which reflects its pointed gables, while the parish church, half-way up on a small terrace, announces its presence by the little belfry piercing through the thick foliage at the top of those hundred and seventy-four worn steps cut in the rock, and offers to the pilgrims who visit its altar a test of their pious fervour. But we must push on; we pursue the path that winds on above this terrace, and in time we reach the *plateau*. Here we lay aside our own notes to give our readers the graphic description of M. le Vicomte Walsh:—

"The porch, or portico," says he, "is flanked on either side by two noble towers defending the entrance; hence start two slopes, or declivities, at either extremity of which stand two fortified towers; that on the right still retains upon its *crénelles* the astrological and cabalistic signs of the Queen Medicis, whose name it bears; that on the left is called 'la Tour d'Amboise.'" . . . . "A noble avenue dividing the green sward now covering the outer moat, which has been filled up, leads in a straight line up to the portico; the large doors are of ancient oak, and on the panels we discern some extremely curious early carving, representing the twelve apostles. If we follow this avenue, we have on our right 'la Promenade des Mottes,' otherwise called 'le Mail de la Reine,' planted with fine old elms and limes; on the left a wild ravine, rude and untamed, where the rugged oaks have grown spontaneously between the clefts of the stone."

We now come to speak of the history of this valuable relic. Its defensible position on a commanding and rugged mound, sloping upwards from the very banks of a river, was advisedly selected by its founders, whose unenviable reputation, for the rapacity with which they were wont to levy black-mail on all who ventured within their reach, still cleaves to the scene of their daring outrages. So much for what rendered it *in-*

famous; happily, it consequently redeemed its character, and has since become famous in the annals of France, though the part played by the earlier of its "seigneurs" was stamped by the sanguinary characteristics of feudal times.

During a considerable part of the tenth century the banks of that Loire, now so peacefully following its course through prosperous valleys and smiling vineyards, were made the innocent witnesses of those lawless quarrels which began in rapine and ended in bloodshed, while the echoes of its venerable woods were daily awakened by the clatter of arms, the neighing of war-horses, and the shouts of victory. Might was right, and bands of adventurers infested the hapless country, spreading terror and desolation on all sides, taking prisoners all who were weaker than themselves, and, whether by the ransoms they demanded or the pillage they effected, oppressing and impoverishing the defenceless peasants. Added to these hardships, bands of troops came scouring the country, destroying the crops, and often causing irreparable damage. These mischievous occurrences were mainly due to the ambition of the Comtes d'Anjou, already masters of a considerable part of Touraine, and who had long been desirous of uniting that fine province to their other possessions. The Comtes de Touraine defended their rights valiantly, yet they were destined, before long, to be defeated in the plains of Montlouis. In these desperate daily encounters, the ancient—for we can scarcely call them the legitimate—owners of the soil encountered their companions in arms, brave fighters, knowing no fear but that of being taken for cowards, and when such men met, the results may be imagined. Rarely, indeed, did either party obtain any permanent advantage over the other, and thus these fights became feuds, and endured for centuries.

The first owner of Chaumont whose name we are able to dis-

cover, was Eudes, Comte de Blois. The history of this marauder-chief, for we can call him nothing else, would fill a volume.

About the year 1026, a successor of Eudes, called Eudes II., ceded Chaumont, by way of fief, to Gilduin, Seigneur de Saumur et de Pont-Levoy. The fact was that Gilduin had claimed it as an indemnity for the loss of Saumur, which had fallen into the power of Foulques Nerra, their common enemy, and when Gilduin made a claim, it was not very easy to resist him. We cannot better describe Gilduin than by saying that he was "a man of the time," and we must take into account what the time was. We gather that he had a devoted heart, an iron will, a fiery disposition; whether a friend or an enemy, he was passionate and constant, knowing neither how to love nor hate by halves. He was restlessly active and fertile in resources, above all when he had resolved to revenge himself on an adversary. It may be readily conceived that such a man was the terror of his neighbours, and well merited the surname he had acquired of *le Diable de Saumur*. Though we have no reason to believe that Foulques Nerra was accessible to fear, doubtless he had no wish to quarrel with the *Diable de Saumur;* with what motive, therefore, he suffered Eudes to yield to him the *propriété* de Chaumont, we cannot now tell; but whether to reward his zeal, or to compensate him for his loss, it was, at all events, an act of policy on the part of the *suzerain* which testifies to the ascendancy attained by the vassal: Chaumont was on the borders of Amboise, the possession and residence of Foulques; the two neighbours were equally unpopular, so that Eudes felt pretty easy as to the security of his frontiers.

Towards the end of his life, Gilduin became peaceable, and even pious, and founded the abbey of Fontlevoy; he displayed, among other fine qualities for which his memory is respected, fidelity and attachment to his chief in adversity.

At this time the Château de Chaumont—the name of which has been variously derived, whether from "Chaud-mont" or "Chauve-mont"—was a citadel in which all was disposed for resistance, and the conveniences of domestic life had evidently escaped the calculations of its architect. Its style was severe and altogether utilitarian, and there was nothing graceful or winning in its aspect. It was protected by military outposts, and mounted guards were continually prowling about its issues, while the humble huts of the vassals clustered around the eminence on which it stood, as if sheltering themselves in the obscurity of its shadow.

Suddenly a change is announced in the former habits of the place; dark mistrust and suspicious precaution give way before open-handed festivity and courteous hospitality. Sulpice, the son of Lisois de Bazongers, Seigneur of Amboise, has seen and loved Dénise, granddaughter of Gilduin de Chaumont; the alliance meets with approval on both sides; two formidable neighbours have become cordial friends; the wedding is solemnised with military pomp, and from this event dates the union of the two domains. Such is the origin of the illustrious family of Amboise-Chaumont, destined subsequently to play so important a part in the history of France.

Peace and harmony seemed now fairly established in this turbulent province; but, alas! the warlike spirit, of Gilduin on one side, and of Bazongers on the other, were only smouldering through one generation to break forth into flames in the next. Sulpice II., the issue of that union which had appeared so auspicious, unhappily inherited the turbulence and martial dispositions of his ancestors, and although he now owned both the extensive domains of Chaumont and Amboise—

"Æstuat, infelix, augusto limite . . ."

and he must add still further to these territories. The legendary stories of his ancestors and their exploits, of the valorous combats of *Thibault le Tricheur*, and the desperate enterprises of *Le Diable de Saumur*, fired him with enthusiasm. Disregarding the lawlessness of his proceedings, he marched against his *suzerain*, the Comte de Blois, at the same time refusing his allegiance to the Comtes of Touraine-Anjou, by which he held Amboise. Impetuous in his movements, Sulpice made the attack without any delay, and chose the Blésois for his battle-field; but the visions of success which had floated before his deluded sight were soon to vanish; his expected triumph proved an ignominious defeat. He was beaten, made prisoner, and confined in the dungeon of Châteaudun, there to ruminate on the consequences of his hot-headed revolt, and to repent of his grasping and mistaken ambition. The place of his captivity, then still called Castellodunum, had been built by the ancestor of Sulpice, *Thibault le Tricheur;* its massive tower, ninety feet high, will give an idea of the strength of the place, whence no rescue was possible. The horrors of imprisonment, however, were but a preliminary to the punishment prepared for the unhappy Sulpice.

Under coercion of the abeyance in which he held him, Thibault IV., Comte de Blois, intended to wrest from him the extensive territory he had so rashly and unreasonably attempted to augment, and finding that detention alone was of no avail in forcing him to abandon his claims, with the barbarous indifference of those savage times, he subjected him to cruelties the very recital of which is horrifying. The helpless and unhappy captive, stripped of his garments, was loaded with chains and stretched upon an iron frame, to which he was bound, while a fire was lighted beneath; his flesh was thus scorched by a slow heat, which was withdrawn as soon as it was perceived his

strength was on the point of failing; he was then allowed a few days to recover, during which the demand of his implacable foe was again laid before him, but only to be met with the same obstinate refusal as before. The atrocious scene was repeated again and again, by this refined process of cruelty, new wounds being each time added to the old sores, which were thus opened afresh. What must have been the courage of the man who could face such an ordeal and resist the means by which he might have avoided it! Such, nevertheless, was that of Sulpice; he remained undaunted to the end, and died refusing the proffered conditions.

But this superhuman bravery seems to have exhausted the valour of his ancestral blood. Sulpice left a son, Hugues, who, with his younger brothers, had fallen into the victor's hands. The terrible details of his father's death were depicted to him in all their ferocity, and he was offered his life and that of his brothers in exchange for the château and lands of Chaumont only. Hugues was incapable of facing the frightful alternative, and on his hesitation, the act by which he ceded his rights to the paternal acres was placed before him, while the iron bed on which his father had been roasted alive was simultaneously held before his eyes. Hugues signed the deed, and there can be very little doubt he "regained his freedom with a sigh." However, when men were monsters, it was something to regain it at all, for Thibault was a vindictive enemy, and no sooner became master of Chaumont than he rased the old fortress to the ground. This seems to have been an act of the most inconsiderate folly, prompted by an impulse of contemptible revenge.

The value of the stronghold so recklessly destroyed soon became apparent, together with the necessity of following the prudent example of the Comtes de Blois, who had found all the benefit of placing it in the possession of a Cerberus like Gilduin

de Saumur. Thibault V. succeeded to his father in 1160, and one of his first acts was to rebuild the castellated edifice of Chaumont, and thus restore the very bulwark of his possessions, and the only security for the independence of his position. Alas! it was too late. The Comtes d'Anjou and Touraine were now Kings of England; and the Comte de Blois, at the head of what he thought a formidable force, was no match for the astute and powerful monarch Henry II. The king, nevertheless, entered into campaign with him, and made very short work of him and his men. He garrisoned Chaumont, and, with a feeling of poetical justice which we seldom see realised in practical life, he restored it to Hugues, the son of the barbarously murdered Sulpice. This arrangement met his own views perfectly; no one was more likely to keep the son of the inhuman assassin at bay than the son of his victim. Hugues remembered his father's outrages and the king's bounty, and remained faithful to the obligations which both imposed upon him. Henry visited him frequently at Chaumont, and was received with princely liberality.

However, when, some time after, peace was established, a new complication arose. Love and war were strongly mingled in those days, and family feuds seem to have been fertile in producing romantic attachments forbidden by all surrounding circumstances, and apparently fostered to prove the truth of the adage which predicts obstacles and difficulties in the course of true love. It was now Sulpice III., eldest son of Hugues, who, having seen the beautiful Isabelle, eldest daughter of Thibault, Comte de Chartres et de Blois, informed his father, to his horror and amazement, that he had dared to fall desperately in love with the daughter of the mortal foe of his house. Guelphs and Ghibellines, Montagues and Capulets, Torrianos and Viscontis, were doves at play, compared with the

houses of Chaumont and Blois, and for a long and anxious time the courtship was carried on by means of stolen interviews, no doubt incomparably more delightful and romantic than the dull routine of an approved betrothal; but the hearts of fathers have been known to relent even when those of enemies are inflexible, and so it proved in this case. The contending houses were once more reconciled by the innocent loves of their children, and, as before, peace and harmony resumed their sway.

As before, however, that peace was of short-lived duration. Sulpice III. was possessed by the demon ambition which had been the ruin of Sulpice II. His grandfather's mantle had descended upon him, and it now entangled him in its treacherous folds. He joined Philippe-Auguste against his patron, the King of England, to whom he owed everything. His excuse for this treachery was plausible: he attributed it to patriotic motives, and to his approval of the effort that sovereign was making for the aggrandisement of France.

Sulpice III. died childless, and the ownership of Chaumont passed into the De Berrie family, who dropped their own patronymic to adopt the title and arms of Amboise, which, since the marriage of Isabelle and Sulpice, had been united with that of Chaumont.

The next Seigneur of Chaumont of any note, was Louis de Chaumont, one of the favourites of Charles VII. Louis seems to have inherited the family failing, and would have done well to adopt for his motto, "*Qui trop embrasse, mal étreint.*" He was dissatisfied with his position, and cast a covetous eye on that of another *Seigneur*, who he felt was a dangerous rival in the king's favour. This was the Sieur de Giac, whose high position had already excited the jealousy of De la Trémouille, a *protégé* of the Connétable Richemont; and he therefore found

no difficulty in joining the party who were already secretly conspiring against Giac, and were only awaiting an opportunity of getting rid of him. The Court of Charles VII. was very erratic: its next move was to Issoudun. Giac had followed the king, and was lodged in the château in the very next room to him. Notwithstanding this circumstance, the conspirators considered their time come, and set off for the place. They were numerously escorted, and having surprised the sentinel, they secured him, and proceeded direct to the château. They reached it just before dawn, when all its inmates were sunk in repose; and arriving at Giac's room, they broke in the door, and found him in bed. Without giving him time to dress, they gagged and pinioned him, and hurried him off to Bourges, whence he was shortly transferred to Dun-le-Roy. They hastily brought him before a tribunal which condemned him to death. He was then thrust into a sack and thrown into the river. Giac was so much detested that little inquiry was made into the circumstances of his death; and the king—whose grief for his loss, any more than his sense of the outrage committed against himself, was not very profound—took little notice of the affair. The results, however, were not very satisfactory to the authors of the deed. De la Trémouille, it is true, got his place of *chancelier* in 1426, but soon turned upon the Connétable Richemont, to whom he owed everything, and with base ingratitude brought about his disgrace, though in the end Richemont recovered the king's favour, and in his turn drove De la Trémouille from court. As for Louis de Chaumont, *il en était pour ses frais d'assassinat*, for he got no advantage from his crime; so far from it, his lands were confiscated for a time by the parliament, but were ultimately restored to him.

During the genealogical complications that took place about this time, Chaumont and Amboise were disintegrated, and

Amboise became annexed first to the crown, and then to the Orleans property. From this time the elder branch of the family of Amboise identified itself with the Château de Chaumont, and resided there.

We shall next speak of Georges, Cardinal d'Amboise, the eighth son of Pierre de Chaumont, who, having married Anne de Beuil, had by her eighteen children, of whom Georges was born in 1460. Being from childhood destined to enter holy orders, he was, at the early age of fourteen, elected Bishop of Montauban, and soon after, one of the chaplains of Louis XI. He conducted himself with great propriety until the death of that king, in 1483, when, joining in an intrigue with Louis, Duc d'Orléans, nephew and son-in-law of the king, he and his patron were both arrested. Louis, some little time after, obtained his release, and did not forget the friend whose misfortunes were occasioned by his attachment to himself. He soon after appointed him to the see of Narbonne; but as he took pleasure in his society, and this appointment removed him too far from Amboise, which was now the residence of the Duke of Orleans, he exchanged it for that of Rouen, with the concurrence of the chapter, in 1493. No sooner was he installed there than the Duc d'Orléans, who was Governor of Normandy, made him lieutenant-general of that province, with the same power and authority as himself. Normandy was at this time in great disorder: the nobles oppressed the people, the judges were corrupt, the soldiery, discharged since the recent war, were turned loose, idle, and without means, upon the country, and infested the roads, prowling about in strong marauding parties, pillaging villages and isolated houses, and robbing and assassinating travellers. In less than a year, Georges d'Amboise, by his excellent management, reduced all the various classes to order, and, by his prudent laws and wise administration,

established a condition of peace and contentment which had never been known there before.

Charles VIII. died in 1498. Louis, Duc d'Orléans, ascended the throne. Where could he find a wiser or more efficient minister than the man he had already weighed in the balance and found worthy of his fullest confidence? The very first act of his ministry conciliated to him all hearts. Hitherto it had been the custom to levy an onerous and special tax to defray the expenses of the coronation. D'Amboise advised Louis to break through this very unpopular practice, and instead, to diminish the rates by a tenth. The measure succeeded in all ways: the treasury maintained a fair and sufficient balance, the people were relieved of a galling burden, and appreciating the forbearance and consideration of the new government, unanimously proclaimed both king and minister by the endearing title of "Père du Peuple."

Various traits of like liberality of this prelate are recorded; among others, that he set apart two-thirds of his income for feeding the poor and maintaining the church. Neither did he take any abbatial revenues for himself. It is said that a Norman gentleman, desirous of carrying out the marriage of his daughter, applied to him, begging him to purchase, at any price he would offer, the estate on which he lived. D'Amboise ascertained the value of the property, which he handed to him, leaving him, at the same time, in possession of his land. He was received at Paris with great magnificence, in the character of legate of the Holy Father, and during his legation he took steps to reform several religious orders; among others, the Jacobins, the Cordeliers, and the monks of St. Germain-des-Prés. D'Amboise was very active in obtaining the divorce between Louis XII. and Jeanne de France; for which somewhat questionable service he received the grateful acknowledgments of the king, and soon

after obtained his cardinal's hat. The character of this prelate was so disinterested, that we are disposed to believe him when he says, that "although he would of all things have desired to be Pope, it was only that he might occupy a more extended sphere of usefulness." After the death of Pius III. his holy ambition might have been gratified, had he understood how to meet the wily intrigues of the Italian cardinals. All the powers of Europe would have favoured his elevation, except the Venetians, who were strongly opposed to him; and it is said that, owing to this, he induced Louis XII. to make war upon them. Mediæval France owed to the Cardinal d'Amboise a large debt of gratitude for the zeal and integrity with which he served his country; these qualities stood him instead of the more brilliant powers of the mind, with which he was not gifted. D'Amboise was only fifty, when, being seized with a dangerous illness, he retired to the P. P. Celestins, at Lyons, to be nursed, and while there would often exclaim, "Frère Jean, Frère Jean! que n'ai-je toujours été Frère Jean!" He had led a life of great purity, unsullied by the irregularities and laxity of his contemporaries, and he died beloved and regretted by the entire nation, to whom his whole life had been devotedly given, on the 25th May, 1510. His body was embalmed and conveyed to Rouen, where it lies in the cathedral of which he was bishop, beneath a magnificent marble monument. Of the numerous family born to his father, many died in childhood, and of those who survived to a later period of life, Aimery became Grand Master of the Order of St. John at Jerusalem, and died unmarried, having won some of the most signal victories ever gained by Christian over infidels.

It remains for us to speak of the next generation of the Chaumont family, of which, four were the last inheritors of the name and lands of this illustrious house.

Of the youthful and beautiful Catherine we only know that—

"Early, bright, transient, chaste as morning dew,
She sparkled, was exhaled—and went to heaven!"

Her ethereal form was lent to earth for a few short years, and floated like a graceful vision around her ancestral roof-tree. The manorial castle of Chaumont was illumined by the brief brightness of her presence. Her life was an evanescent poem, fleeting as the rainbow, and tinged with that shade of melancholy inseparable from an early death. The only evidence of her passage survives in her simple but elegant poems, exhaling a spirit of devotion which follows her even into the mazes of mythology—or rather, we should say, they evince a fervour, a *bizarrerie*, and a mysticism which are altogether of the Renaissance. She mingles, with naïve simplicity and unconscious pantheism, the beliefs of past and present times, and invoking universal nature to join her in praising the Queen of heaven, includes heathen gods and ancient Jews, saints and heroes of mediæval romance, in the comprehensive choir:—

"Viens Royne Hester toute parée de joyaulx,
Venez Phœbus, Cecile et Florimonde!
Accompagner par honneurs spéciaulx,
La plus belle qui jamais fust au monde."

These curious and suggestive poems have been collected, and are published under the title of "Dévotes Epîtres de Katherine d'Amboise."

By the influence of his uncle the cardinal, her brother, Charles d'Amboise, became Maréchal et Amiral de France. Illustrious by his descent, he was not less so by his bravery and his knowledge of military tactics; but his self-will often prejudiced him. He distinguished himself in 1509 at the battle of Agnadello, and in 1511 he nearly took Pope Julius II. prisoner, but he lost Mirandola. This misfortune affected him

so deeply that he died of grief in the following February, aged only thirty-eight. When dying, he was overcome with remorse for having made war against the Pope, and craved absolution.

The property now came to his eldest son, Charles d'Amboise, who at his death was a mere child; but the blood of the d'Amboises boiled, rather than flowed, in his veins. At an early age he followed the military career, and when only twenty-two, fell on the field of honour, being killed at the battle of Pavia in 1525.

On the death of this promising young soldier, the sole surviving heir to this vast property was Antoinette, his cousin, married to Jean de la Rochefoucauld Barbézieux.

Not long after it came into the hands of this family, Catherine de Medicis cast a longing eye upon the Château de Chaumont. Its wild and commanding situation, its architectural form, its ancient and romantic annals, mingled so intimately as they were with the history of the feudal times and of the country generally, invested it with peculiar attractions for the Florentine princess. She offered for it 120,000 livres tournois; and for this sum it became hers on the 31st March, 1550. This was a new episode in the annals of the old manorial castle; it was the first time it had been a royal residence, and great preparations were made there to receive the king Henri II., the queen, and the royal children. Henri was delighted with Chaumont, and Catherine, during the first few months of possession, was equally pleased with the purchase; but on comparing it with Chenonceaux, which the king had in a thoughtless moment given to Diane de Poitiers, his mistress, she was filled with jealousy, and determined to get it back from her at the first opportunity. She began to dislike Chaumont, and her prejudice was still further augmented by an incident which Loiseleur recounts;

and we can scarcely wonder it should have affected her superstitious mind.

We may judge of the extent to which the most educated were influenced by the belief in supernatural agency at this time, by the following passage in the diary of Marguerite de Valois. She thus expresses herself:—"Some suppose that God holds the great under his special protection, and that to minds in which shines some unusual excellence he gives, through the instrumentality of their good geniuses, secret presentiments of the events about to befall them, whether good or evil. Thus in the case of the queen, my mother, several instances of this have happened. For example, the night before that fatal tournament, she dreamed that she saw the king, my father, wounded in the eye, as indeed every one knows he was; but she knew it before it happened, for having woke, she begged him many times not to take part in the games and combats that day, and to content himself with the pleasure of seeing the combatants, without making himself one of them. But inevitable destiny did not permit such good fortune for the country, as that he should accept this useful counsel. The queen never lost any of her children, but that on the previous night she saw a great flame, and awoke suddenly, exclaiming, '*Dieu garde mes enfans!*' During her illness at Metz, where, by a pestilential fever which she took while visiting the sick with the religieuses in that town, she was brought to death's door, she knew that she should recover from the contagion; for her preservation was miraculous, God restoring her to the State, which needed her so much, through the skill of M. de Castelan, her doctor, who —a new Esculapius—thus gave a signal proof of his art. While the queen was dosing, and the King Charles, my brother, and my sister and brother De Lorraine, were standing round her bed, attended by many gentlemen of the council and many

ladies and princesses, who, thinking her beyond hope, yet did not abandon her, she cried out, as if she saw the battle of Jarnac, 'See, see, they fly! My son has won the victory! Hé, mon Dieu! pick up my son, he is on the ground; and there, in that hedge, is the Prince de Condé—but *he* is dead.' All who heard her thought she raved; but, on the following night, M. de Lopés arrived bringing her the news, and all particulars, which he had travelled night and day to carry expeditiously. 'You are a pleasant fellow,' said she, 'to wake me for that. Why, I knew it the day before yesterday.' And then they perceived that she had not been wandering, but that she had received one of those monitions which God accords to rare and illustrious persons; and although I do not consider myself worthy to be thus distinguished, yet even I have received such warnings, and never did anything extraordinary happen to me that I did not receive some previous intimation, either by dreams or otherwise, so that I may truly say, 'De mon bien ou mon mal, mon esprit m'est oracle.'"

Catherine had her "oratory" and consulting-chamber here as in all her palaces, and hither Ruggieri attended her, and assisted at her astrological calculations. During one of their conferences she told him the predictions made by Nostradamus as to the future glories of her sons, and expressed great curiosity as to how the destinies that he had prognosticated for them were to be carried out. No doubt there was something ominous in the successive reigns of "five kings," four of whom were brothers, and nearly of an age. Ruggieri reflected, and then told the queen if she had the courage to learn the coming fates of her husband and children, he had no doubt he could, by the exercise of his art, put her in possession of future events which she could only learn through his intervention. Ruggieri required one month to make his invocations and preparations,

and having fixed both day and hour, promised the queen, on his life, that she should then know all the particulars she required.

At the appointed moment, and with a punctuality worthy of all praise, Ruggieri was ready for the queen. Catherine, on her part, pale with anxiety, and a terror which, as a mother, she could not shake off, in thus contemplating the possible prospects of her children, was not behind the time. Enveloped in a black veil, Catherine stood before the astrologer, and with an assumed courage which her face belied, bade him lead the way. Ruggieri conducted her through a dark and narrow passage, at the extremity of which he raised a *portière*, and introduced his royal disciple into a spacious, vaulted room, strewed, as if by accident, with skeletons of various animals, herbs of different kinds, parchments scribbled over with cabalistic characters, mystic wands, retorts, instruments of magic, mirrors, cauldrons, and all the apparatus of sorcery.

Ruggieri had cast the horoscopes of the young princes, and assured the queen that his calculations altogether corresponded in their results with those of Nostradamus. He added, that not only were these children to wear the crowns of kings, but that all were to die violent and premature deaths, and to leave no issue, so that in them the Valois dynasty was at an end.

Having informed her thus far, the astrologer seemed reluctant to proceed. Catherine, however, though deeply disturbed, was not a woman to be daunted by any revelation, however gloomy. She summoned up all the powers of her masculine nature, and demanded, with trembling perturbation, the confirmation of these presages.

Ruggieri drew back the heavy folds of a dark crimson drapery, and disclosed a magic mirror, on which he begged the queen to fix her attention.—A ponderous bedstead, with carved

spiral columns supporting the massive canopy, now occupies the spot where this dark and stirring scene took place. Opposite is a deeply-embrasured window, through the richly-coloured panes of which, we may suppose the pale rays of the October evening sun to have fallen ominously on the ghastly details of this secret interview.—The queen raised her eyes to the polished surface, and saw reflected there a vast *salle*, but, to her surprise, not the one in which she and the magician stood. Ruggieri informed her that she would see five kings pass before her, and that they would each reign as many years as they made circuits of the room. The first who appeared was the reigning king, who came forward with thoughtful step, but while the queen was endeavouring to examine his features, he started as if stopped by some unseen obstacle, and immediately vanished. Catherine, aghast, saw herself a widow—no longer the queen-consort of a powerful monarch, but burdened with responsibilities which she did not yet know how she should be able to bear; but there was no time for reflection: Ruggieri roused the queen from her stupor, and bid her take a prompt survey of the coming *tableau*. A weak and sickly figure now presented itself, and after two measured turns round the chamber, which betrayed a painful effort, slowly withdrew. The next who came made thirteen circuits and a half, and disappeared, leaving, as it were, a crimson cloud upon the polished surface. Then appeared one who made fifteen rounds, and was no more seen. At each of these visions, Catherine, whose credulity was measured by her superstition, shuddered anew as she saw her progeny taken from her, one after another, without leaving a successor of her house and name; but what was her dismay when, on looking for her youngest son, the Duc d'Alençon, she saw instead, the simulacrum of Henri IV., who entered on the field nimble and hearty, and made twenty entire circuits, but

became invisible while finishing the twenty-first! Then came a little prince of tender years, who passed round thirty-eight times, and after that, all became confused and undefined, because, says the chronicle, "the queen declared she would not see any more."

Catherine retired from this interview with a depressing conviction of coming woes, and an indistinct apprehension of their consequences. Soon after, the court left Chaumont, and Catherine vowed she would never more enter its precincts. It was not long before the sudden and unlooked-for fulfilment of the first of these vivid but lugubrious prophecies came to strengthen her belief in the rest; and the earnestness with which she sought to dissuade the king, her husband, from engaging in that fatal combat at the tournament which formed part of the festivities of his daughter's marriage, no doubt had its source in the misgivings she naturally felt at every semblance of danger which approached him.

On the death of Henri II., his widow remembered her old animosity against Diane de Poitiers, and she felt there was now no obstacle between her and her revenge. She had set her heart on Chenonceaux even before she disliked Chaumont, and she now determined to possess it. Equally anxious to own the one and to be rid of the other, she proposed an exchange, at which Diane was furious, but recognising in her altered fortunes her absolute powerlessness to resist the queen-regent, she found it more politic to yield to the distasteful arrangement. Diane accepted Chaumont, but nothing would induce her to submit to Catherine's instigation that she should live there; the mistress of two kings could not so far forget her past supremacy as to stoop to obey even a queen. She only survived her fallen greatness two years, which she passed in her Château d'Anêt—where she died, Brantôme would have us believe, as beautiful as ever, although aged sixty-six!

Chaumont remained in the family of Diane Duchesse de Valentinois, and on her death descended to her eldest daughter, Françoise de Brézé, then a dowager duchess, and mother of the fifth Duc de Bouillon. His father was Robert de la Marck, grandson of the famous Boar of Ardennes, Maréchal de France, Prince de Sedan, and fourth Duc de Bouillon, and the mother of this fourth duke was niece of the Cardinal d'Amboise. On the decease of the duchess, Chaumont came to her daughter, married to Henri-de-la-Tour, father of Turenne. After this the château was bought and sold, repeatedly changing from more or less ignoble owners till it came into, and remained for a short time in, the possession of the Duc de Beauvilliers, who bought it in 1699. This nobleman shared with Fénélon the honour and the glory of the education of the Duc de Bourgogne, and his noble character fully justified his appointment to this responsible office. He married the daughter of Colbert, by whom he had eight daughters, the youngest of whom—the only one who did not embrace a religious life—married Louis de Rochechouart, Prince de Tonnay-Charente, bringing him the lands of Chaumont as her dowry. But the fortunes of Chaumont were not always cast among aristocratic associations, and it was again sold and purchased successively by *parvenus*, whose pseudo-greatness seemed to mock the princely associations of the venerable place.

In 1810 this domain, successively the stronghold of feudal chiefs, the birthplace of heroes, the palace of monarchs, the heritage of nobles, and, *pròh pudor!* the country-box of retired tradesmen, became the residence of a woman of genius, around whom eagerly gathered all the wits of her time. Madame de Staël, exiled from the capital for her political principles, and forbidden to approach it within forty leagues, took up her abode within the old grey walls of Chaumont. She made no secret of

her disgust at this compulsory rustication, and was never reconciled to her fate, although during her "*Dix ans d'exil*" she contrived to hold a little court of intimate, devoted, and congenial friends. "Mon ami," said she one day to Benjamin Constant, as they stood looking from one of the windows of the château, "you observe that beautiful Loire flowing before us, with its clear and limpid waters—do you know that I had rather see the black and muddy stream which waters Paris, passing beneath my windows?"

Madame de Staël had not always been hostile to Napoleon. She had welcomed with generous enthusiasm the young victor of Italy; she applauded his judgment and his valour, and would willingly have pointed out to him improvements in his mode of administration, but, unfortunately, she assumed a patronizing tone, which must have been highly distasteful to him: Napoleon, therefore, resented the attempted intimacy, admiring neither the lady's person nor her mode of proceeding. Few women can forget or forgive the *spretæ, injuria, formæ*, and from the time when Madame de Staël discovered Napoleon's sentiments towards her, she hated him with a cordial hatred.

Napoleon's opinion of this lady was undisguisedly expressed, and he gave her to understand that he considered she would have been better employed "*à nourrir ses enfans*" than in venturing into the realms of politics and polemics. Nevertheless, while he spoke with contempt of her "*pied de Staël*," he might have submitted to see her placed on one, had she never aspired to be more than the authoress of "Corinne."

Madame de Staël lost no time in returning to Paris as soon as the "petit caporal" was removed out of mischief; but her triumph was short-lived, for she died there in 1817.

In 1834 Chaumont was the property of M. le Comte

d'Aramon, and when M. le Vicomte Walsh married his widow in 1850, his first care was to carry out a judicious restoration of the château in the style of the sixteenth century. It was M. de La Morandière who directed the works, and the most perfect taste has been exhibited in the results. The moats have been re-opened, the drawbridge reconstructed, the towers restored, the chapel redecorated; the staircase has been carried to the uppermost story, and an interior gallery has been built. The left wing is now terminated by an elegant gable, which replaces one of the northern towers, and Chaumont is itself again.

One of the prettiest views of the Loire is to be gained from the old stone balcony of the château overhanging the wooded steep which must be ascended to reach the *plateau;* and the esplanade, which replaces two towers demolished a century ago, commands one of the finest panoramic sweeps imaginable.

We were particularly interested in pacing the "grande galerie fleur-de-lysée," where we found ingeniously collected, the scutcheons of all the various successive owners of the castle—an heraldic history carrying us back into ages which grow darker and darker, until their obscurity baffles our further research. We lingered, too, in the chamber of Catherine de Medicis, balancing our doubts as to what we ought to believe, and what to reject, of the various accounts left us of her heterogeneous and anomalous character: for while we read, that to her is attributed the sudden and mysterious deaths of some of her own children, we cannot but remember that Marguerite de Valois, her daughter, speaks of her, in the simple and unsophisticated pages of her diary, as "une si bonne mère qui ne vivoit que pour ses enfans, abandonnant, à toute heure, sa vie pour conserver la leur, et leur Estat;" and her son Henri III. declares, in the harangue he made at her death, that he hardly

knows whether she deserved more, the title of "*Mère des Rois,*" or "*Mère du Royaume.*" The opinions even of her contemporary biographers differ so much that it is scarcely possible to arrive at a definite conclusion respecting her, while writers of romance have taken advantage of her ambiguous reputation to fix upon her some of the wildest incidents of fiction. In all probability her life was made up of commendable as well as reprehensible acts, of each of which, the prominent position she held, magnified the value. We transcribe the equivocal criticism with which Pierre de l'Estoile sums up the very minute account he gives of the death of this princess.

"Several *pasquils* and distichs," says he, "were published against her memory, of which the following lines, thrown into the form of an epitaph, are about the best:—

'La Reyne qui çy gît fut un diable et un ange,
Toute pleine de blasme et pleine de louange:
Elle soutint l'Etat, et l'Etat mit à bas;
Elle fit maints accords et pas moins de débats;
Elle enfanta trois rois et cinq guerres civiles,
Fit bâtir des châteaux et ruiner des villes,
Fit bien de bonnes loix et de mauvais édits.
Souhaite-lui, passant, enfer et paradis.'

"On Sunday, 8th January, Lincestre announced to the people the death of the queen-mother; 'laquelle,' said he paradoxically, 'a fait beaucoup de bien et de mal, et crois qu'il y a encor plus de mal que de bien. Aujourd'hui se présente une difficulté; scavoir si l'Eglise catholique doit prier pour elle, qui a vécu si mal et soutenue souvent l'hérésie, encor que sur la fin elle ait tenu, dit-on, pour notre droite Union, et n'ait consenti à la mort de nos bons princes. Surquoy je vous dirai que si vous voulez lui donner à l'avanture, par charité un *pater* et un *ave*, il lui servira de ce qu'il pourra; je vous le laisse à votre liberté.'"

Palma Cayet, in his "Chronologie Novénaire," relating the circumstances of her death, says that "the criers who went about the streets commanding that prayers should be offered for her soul, *qualified her* as wife of a king and mother of three kings and two queens. She died," he adds, "at the moment when France most needed her, as said the Sieur Bertaut in the funeral discourse he pronounced upon her death :—

'L'oracle de nos jours,
En qui seule vivait l'art d'enchanter l'orage
Par les charmes divins qu'un esprit doux et sage
Porte dans sa parole ez publiques traictez
Où l'on veut, en flattant les esprits irritez,
Monstrer une prudence en grands faits exercée,
Et de deux ennemis entre le caducée.' "

From this room we enter the royal *tribune*, and can survey the chapel. It is a carefully executed specimen of ecclesiastical architecture, and the length of the nave, together with the character of all its proportions, give it the aspect of a miniature church. The altar is of wood elaborately carved, and its bas-reliefs have a brilliant effect, being painted on a gold background. The tracery of the windows is *flamboyant*, and the glass richly coloured; the wood carvings have been cleverly restored, the niches are again adorned with their statues, and the distinguished founder is recalled to us by the tattered and faded—but, for all that, venerable—cardinal's hat which depends from the arched roof above the carved dais.

The comfort of the living-rooms—estimating comfort by the exigencies of nineteenth-century progress—has been religiously sacrificed to the archæological respect entertained by the restorer, for the original architects, and the taste of the epochs in which the edifice was constructed has been adopted throughout.

From the heights on the opposite bank we obtain the best

idea of the Château de Chaumont. The outline is severe, and it impresses us with the character of a fortress; but though forcible and imposing, it is not without a certain elegance. The buildings surrounding the *cour d'honneur* are valuable as types of what French architecture was during the period immediately preceding the *Renaissance.*

CHAMBORD.

Excursion from Blois to Chambord—Provincial Travelling in France—Scenery, and Village Populations—Women Labourers—Situation of Chambord; its Park and Surroundings; its Aspect and Characteristics within and without—Brantôme's Description; compares it to the Escurial—Châteaubriand's Visit to and Account of Chambord—François' altered Character; how impressed upon the Building—Difficulty in tracing its original Architect—Variously attributed—Curious Archives relating to its History—Legend of Thibault le Tricheur—Montfrault—Guy de Chastillon—Its previous History under Louis XII.—François' Reasons for residing at Chambord; his Eagerness to take up his Abode there; his Taste, Liberality, and generous Patronage of Art, Literature, and Genius—Clever Construction of the Interior of Chambord—The Duchesses d'Etampes and de Valentinois—Secret Passages, *Escaliers dérobés*, and curious double Staircase—Charles Quint's Visit—François' failing Health; Devotedness of his Sister Marguerite—The Collége Royal—Saint-Gelais—The King's captious Humour—Anecdote of the King and his Sister—Emilie de Lagny—Window-pane broken by Louis XIV. at the Instigation of La Vallière—Siege of St. Dizier—Perplexity of Sancerre—François' last Visit to Chambord; Marguerite accompanies him; Chambord under his Successor, Henri II.—Diane de Poitiers—Catherine de Medicis; her Tower—Chambord under Charles IX.; under Henri III.—Palma Cayet's Description of this Monarch—Pasquinade—Chambord under Henri IV; under Louis XIII.—Mademoiselle de Hautefort—Chambord the Appanage of Gaston—La Grande Mademoiselle—The famous Staircase—The Duc de Lauzun—Chambord reverts to the Crown—Louis XIV.—Molière's *début*—Anecdotes of Lulli and others—Court Favour—Mansard; his Vandalisms—Chambord the Residence of King Stanislaus; his Character and melancholy Death—Chambord given to Maréchal Saxe; the Life he led there—The Polignac Family—Chambord at the Revolution; under Napoleon I.; under Louis XVIII.—The Wagram Family—Berthier's Widow—Chambord bought by the Royalists and presented to the Duc de Bordeaux; its Condition; Expenses of Repair and Maintenance; fallen into Decay.

CHATEAU DE CHAMBORD.

"Lord of the soil,
His palace rose and kissed the gorgeous clouds,
Streams bent their current to his will, trees sprung;
The naked waste put on luxuriant robes,
And plains of happy cottages cast out
Their tenants, and became a hunting-field."

POLLOK.

"And every woman serve and praise,
And, to thy power, hir honor raise;
And if that any mis-sayere
Woman despise, see thou dost here
Blame him, and bid him hold him still."

CHAUCER. *Romaunt of the Rose.*

OUR visit to the curious and characteristic Château de Chambord was the result of an excursion from Blois. We started one morning in a rattling old cabriolet, which might have dated from the days of Noah's ark, and once or twice were nearly "spilt"—*versés*—as the French expressively say it; but our driver only phlegmatically remarked with a shrug, after each jolt, "Ah, bah! ça, ce n'est rien!" followed by a "*sacre*" or two, addressed to the horse, who did his duty we had almost said "manfully," over that broken old road, taking into account all the disadvantages of a spliced shaft, a loose shoe, and a knotted rope-harness, which a respectable scarecrow would not have thought for a moment of wearing. Our way lay through woods and vineyards and cultivated plains, enlivened every now and then by picturesque but uncomfortable farm-houses and clusters of cottages, from the open doors of which children and pigs issued forth to see us pass. Mothers carrying their little ones on their backs, and other female peasants were to be seen,

with sunburnt skins and weather-beaten features, laboriously tilling the ground. Where, the husbands, fathers, sons, uncles, or nephews, of these women-labourers conceal themselves is always a mystery. We shrewdly suspect they have succeeded in establishing a system which throws double duties on the weaker sex, who accept the arrangement because they *are* weak.

We saw nothing particularly striking in the character of the scenery, unless its extreme flatness, and were not altogether sorry when our driver announced that we were now approaching our destination. Here and there, wild game crossed our path, and we were evidently getting into a not very frequented country. Soon we found ourselves entering a vast walled park, which, we learned, comprised something like 8,000 hectares, while the wall is 24 kilomètres in circuit. Within its precincts are thick woods and an endless growth of venerable trees, wide avenues, beaten paths, and the whole village of Chambord, surrounding its steepled church. Three-and-twenty farms are scattered over the land, and the population amounts to about 500 souls. We came somewhat suddenly upon the palace, the first impression of which is striking in the extreme; the length of the curiously incidented *façade* is very remarkable, but takes from the height, while the tall chimneys which bristle up in great numbers on the roof, add to this deteriorating effect.

Some writers have compared Chambord to the Moorish palaces of Spain, but although—having studied these—we fail, ourselves, to trace the resemblance, we may perhaps admit an analogy between the styles, inasmuch as in both cases the result is entirely unlike that of any other effort of architecture. There is a certain *rapport*, perhaps, in the fantastic nature of the general impression and in the combination of forms which are neither Gothic, nor Greek, nor Roman. Here, partaking more or less of all, they offer themselves to us as surviving evidence

of the existence of a distinct epoch between the expiring civilisation of one period and the reviving cultivation of another destined to succeed and, for a time, to surpass it.

Notwithstanding its *bizarrerie*, there is a grandeur in this princely structure, inseparable from the imposing combination of domes and dungeons, turrets and terraces, mingled with spires, minarets, and belfries. The dungeon recalls, it is true, with its four massive towers, each 60 feet in diameter, the compact and severe style of the twelfth century, while the galleries, which give length to the *façade*, impart to it the peculiar *cachet* of the *Renaissance*.

For our own part, we cannot accord to this whimsical structure the unqualified admiration it appears generally to obtain from French architects. "Chambord has been much eulogised," says De Saussaye, "but no praise has ever done it justice: it is only as we become acquainted with its peculiarities that we learn to appreciate them."

Chambord may be said, in its ground plan and distribution, to offer a continuation of the feudal manor with its massive towers, defiant walls, and protecting moats now partly filled up: it is the departing reflex of mediæval tradition, for we trace the advancing state of society in the style of its accessories.

Those sanguinary feuds which fostered hostility and mistrust between the *seigneurs* who owned adjoining territories, had passed away, and although the buildings that succeeded their epoch, retained their towers, turrets, walls, drawbridges, portcullises, dungeons, and battlements, these though now ceasing to be warlike defences, were still retained as castellated decorations.

The château of this period might still hold to the outward form of a fortress, and at a distance might pass for one, but it was now nothing more than a country-seat presenting the grand and imposing simulacrum of a feudal castle. Nowhere is this transformation more effectively expressed than at Chambord.

It would require a volume to convey, with anything like technical accuracy, the architectural anatomy of this vast and imposing edifice; the ornamentation is almost unexampled in profusion and richness of detail. We quote the remarks of André Duchesne in their original *naïveté*, for the language of his times accords better with the subject it describes than any that could be devised by a more modern mind.

"De toutes les maisons de plaisance," says he, "les palais, et autres Châteaux que nos Seigneurs ont fait bâtir très richement, celuy de Chambourg est bien le plus magique en pièces rares qu'il y ait guères en Europe, et comme l'abrégé de toute l'industrie humaine de son temps. Le grand roi François I^er^ y fut servi partout avec tant d'ordre, de conduite et de jugement, que toutes les parades de son architecture se ressentent de la grandeur de l'un des plus grands rois du monde. Cette royale maison a sa vue jusque sur la ville de Blois, encore qu'elle en soit distante de trois lieues, et limitée de tous côtés de prés, eaux, et forêts, riche d'un escalier qui n'a point son pareil en France, pour être tellement et si largement composé qu'un grand nombre d'hommes y peuvent monter et descendre diversement et en même tems, sans s'entrevoir, et pour être l'un de ses côtés industrieusement dérobé de l'autre."

"I leave to the eye of the curious," continues this quaint old historian, "the chambers, antichambers, *salles*, *garderobbes*, *cabinets*, porticoes, halls, recesses, galleries, and offices, as also the gardens, and principally that styled 'de la Royne,' comprising an extent of five acres, at the extremity of which, towards the forest of Blois, is a broad avenue half a league in length and six *toises* wide, embellished by four rows of fine elms, planted in a straight line—so straight that those of the King of Persia, so much vaunted in ancient history, '*ne seroient rien auprès.*'"

In the quaint old architectural work of Andronet de Cerceau,

published in 1516, and entitled "Les plus excellens Bastiments de France," we find the staircase above described, mentioned as an "escalier à deux montées, percé à iour et entour de celuy quatre salles desquelles l'on va de l'une à l'autre en le circuissant."

Speaking of the elegant and costly residences of François I., Brantôme observes—"What shall we say of Chambourg, which, imperfect as it still is, and not more than half finished, enchants every beholder? for surely," he continues, "when the design shall have been completely carried out, it can only be numbered among the wonders of the world." One of François' projects, when he built Chambord, was to turn the Loire out of its course, and to bring it through these noble grounds. In preparation for this great effort of engineering, a mighty stone wall had been built, and massive iron hoops and rings were fixed in it for mooring thereto the boats and vessels which were to be harboured there, as in a sea-port. "A grand idea, indeed," says Brantôme, "and worthy of such a king, who felt himself able to overmaster nature, and make her succumb to art."

One of François' foibles was to accomplish, and to accomplish triumphantly, feats which would have been regarded as impossible by the *commun des mortels;* and he had no sooner cast his eye over these arid plains of Sologne than he promised himself to call up from this wild and desolate *campagna*—interrupted only by forest-land and tracts of heather, by bogs and marshes, and on the borders of a muddy and tangled stream—a fairy-palace which should be at once the most striking and sumptuous château of the *Renaissance.* The royal caprice was indulged, and we may add it was fully gratified, for Chambord was the offspring of François' own imagination, and no labour or expense was spared to render it what he had intended it should be.

"I do not believe," observes Brantôme, "that the Escorial

itself is worthy to be brought into competition with this grand and magnificent structure, although I have been told by those who have seen it recently, that the *seven miracles* are a long way behind even that. For myself, I only saw the commencement of the Spanish palace, but I know how long a period and what fabulous sums of money the King of Spain has spent upon it, and that every year a 'million of gold' disappears in its construction: yet, notwithstanding all this, our king's Chambord is an incomparably grander edifice."

It is interesting to compare this eulogistic description of an ancient writer, contemporary with its earliest improvements—for its origin is altogether beyond any existing tradition—with the account given of it by an appreciative modern observer—Châteaubriand.

"On arriving at Chambord," says this writer, "we penetrate into the park by one of its disused gates: it opens upon a neglected enclosure, seven leagues in circumference, planted with noble trees: from the entrance may be perceived the château at the end of a sloping avenue. As we advance upon the edifice it rises from the ground in the inverse order of a building perched on an eminence, and which sinks as one approaches it.

"François I., great-grandson of Valentine de Milan, now a changed man, had buried himself in the forests of his ancestress. '*Tout ne m'est rien, rien ne m'est plus*' was the motto of that family, and François had learned to understand the sentiment it conveys. He had tasted of the life of a captive, and had felt that captivity keenly. Chambord bears upon it the impress of the thoughts that had branded themselves upon the mind of the soldier-king during his bitter and humiliating imprisonment; their theme had become women, solitudes, ramparts—and he worked it out at Chambord.

"Chambord has only one staircase, but it is double, inso-

much that two persons can go up and down it at the same time without seeing each other. All here seems made for the mysteries of love and war. The edifice expands at every stage; its fanciful structure suggests a magic origin, and one might suppose that over the spot a bomb had burst, whose fragments had, as they fell, been arrested there in fantastic shapes. The forest of cylindrical or rectangular chimneys which bewilder the sight, are embellished with marble panellings, and reminded me of the shapeless remains I have seen dug up in the excavations of Athens. From a distance, Chambord looks like an arabesque; or it might be compared to a woman whose long hair had been disturbed by the wind, for all sorts of visionary ideas are, as it were, incorporated in the masonry, and the spirit of all that is strange hovers over the turrets. . . . . Within, all the surfaces of walls and ceilings are enriched with the 'fleur-de-lys' and the 'salamander.'"

Now comes the question, "Who was the original architect of Chambord?" But this question is not so easily answered. Still, it is a matter of gratitude, not to say of justice, to try to ascertain to whom we are indebted for works that their authors have left behind them to interest and instruct us.

François' well-known predilection for all that emanated from Italian taste long led to the supposition that the architecture of Chambord must be of trans-Alpine origin, and Primaticcio and Rosso, whom he was known greatly to admire, were fixed upon as the originators of this unique design. This supposition has, however, been now long since pronounced erroneous by those most versed in archæological lore, and, although the name of the real designer has still been left in comparative doubt, all connoisseurs are satisfied that Italy is entirely exonerated from any participation in the creation of the Palace of Chambord.

Considerable light has been thrown upon the difficulty by

the discovery of some documents which have been admitted as evidence that the architect who planned it was a Blésois, and it is supposed that François and he combined their ideas in its production.

Two natives of this same province, Etienne Cartier of Amboise and André Salmon of Tours, in their researches after this hidden fact, exhumed from amid the dusty old archives of the place, two documents which tell us that in 1526, the very year of the foundation of the château, Pierre Nepveu, surnamed *Trinqueau*, of Amboise, was "master of the works" at Chambord; and in 1544, when these works were nearly terminated, Jacques Cogneau, also of Amboise, was "master-mason of the buildings" at Chambord. Upon these, no doubt authentic, statements, it has been contended that possibly Nepveu was the architect of Chambord—the title of "*maistre des œuvres*" being often synonymous with "architect," for the celebrated Jean Goujon had no other style and title than "*maistre maçon du roi.*" Still, this would only enlighten us as to the individual who acted under François I. at the period of the second birth of Chambord, and we are never likely to know who it was cast its primitive foundation, and left behind him that nucleus, but for which, the noble and suggestive pile before us would never have been called into being, for we have ample evidence that when François began his palace, Chambord already existed. It was at that time an ancient and forgotten *maison de plaisance,* which had since the year 1090 belonged to the old Comtes de Blois de la Maison de Champagne. The house was then called Chambord Montfrault, and to the place was attached a soul-stirring legend. This popular tradition ran, that within the dark and mysterious woods that covered this desolate domain, a ghostly hunt took place each midnight, and that the huntsman was no other than one of the former owners and inhabitants of Chambord, named Thibault le Tricheur, who,

wearing a black mask, riding a black mare which sped like the wind, accompanied by a pack of black hounds, and attended by guards of sable hue, traversed the forest from Montfrault to Bury, returning to Montfrault before the morning light. How the traditionists were able so minutely to describe this ominous hunt, which they agreed in declaring was invisible to the eye, is a mystery—but then, so is the whole story. At all events, they affirmed that the presence of this strange *cortége* was perfectly *audible*, and that those who had unintentionally wandered into the forest, and lost their way there by night, had been scared with terror at the sounds of their unearthly nocturnal freaks. They declared that they could distinguish—always approaching and yet always at the same distance—the tramping of hoofs, the baying of dogs, the shouting of men, and the blast of horns.

Whether this supernatural *vacarme* was a dark and inscrutable penance undergone by the soul of Thibault for some secret crime, or whether (supposing that "coming events cast their shadows before") these sounds were the anticipatory echoes of those which were soon to wake up the echoes of those old primæval woods and plains, we know not; but apparently the ghost of Thibault was disgusted with the stir and bustle of busy life, and outrivalled by the substantial huntsmen and dogs which put to shame himself and his shadowy pack, for he appears to have transferred his penitential exercise to some other locality, and life, joy, and revelry usurped the place till then monopolised by this gloomy train, and soon reigned supreme.

The *propriété* of Chambord, like that of Blois, had belonged to Guy de Chastillon, who had succeeded the Counts of Blois in the possession of the whole territory, and both were purchased by Louis, Duc d'Orléans, brother of Charles VI., leaving Guy, who was at the time advanced in years, a life-interest in the same. When, therefore, in 1397, Guy de Chastillon was called to his fathers, the property fell into the hands

of the Orléans family, and in 1498, Louis d'Orléans becoming King of France, Blois and Chambord came to the crown.

During the reign of Louis XII., however, Chambord received little notice from the king. It was by no means an attractive place, and the only inducement it offered was its aptitude for a hunting seat. But Louis XII., who was not so young as he had been, and moreover had neither the health nor the taste for violent exercises, never thought of bringing these advantages into use, and so Chambord continued to be called—when it was called at all—Chambord Montfrault, and continued deserted and forgotten until the gay young Duc d'Angoulesme succeeded to the throne, and then came the emancipation of Chambord, and the triumphs of its palmy days.

The name of François I. is inseparably connected with Chambord. Every attribute of the place recalls his presence, and the taste of his period has signed it with an indelible stamp. Nevertheless, how he came to make a pet place of a spot for which nature had done so little, requires explanation. The barrenness of the soil, the isolation of the site, and the unpicturesque character of the surrounding country, would have sufficed to deter most men; but François not only delighted, as we have said, in vanquishing difficulties, he had here other motives to encourage him. He was passionately fond of hunting, and also, at this time, of the beautiful Châtelaine de Montfrault and the brilliant Comtesse de Thoury,* whose

* Thoury had formerly a fine old château, and was one of those considered so formidable by Abbé Suger, that he caused it to be demolished, lest it should at any time be used against the king, then Louis VII.: the dungeon, therefore, alone remains. Thoury is a *bourg* of 1,300 souls, and at a later period was inhabited successively by two early French poets, whose lives are curious enough to admit of being mentioned here. One of these was Philippe Desportes, who was so attached to the place that no temptation could induce him to leave it. He even refused the archbishopric of Bordeaux, in order to remain undisturbed with all his old associations. His habits were so simple as sometimes to degenerate into

château was in the vicinity; still the task was a formidable one. It is said—and when we observe and realise to ourselves

negligence. One day Henri III. said to him:—"Je double votre pension afin que vous ne vous présentiez point devant moi que vous ne soyez plus propre."

The other of these men was Mathurin Regnier, nephew of Desportes, who sat in one arbour of his uncle's garden penning satires, while this relative occupied the other, translating the Psalms into French verse, as a compensatory exercise for his "*rimes galantes.*" Like his uncle, he enjoyed pensions and benefices; but, less wise, he dissipated his life in pleasure, and prematurely old at thirty, died of decrepitude at forty, having written upon himself the following characteristic and epigrammatic epitaph, the candour of which is more to be admired than the sentiment:—

"J'ai vécu sans nul pensement,
Me laissant aller doucement
A la bonne loi naturelle;
Et je m'étonne fort pourquoi
La Mort deigna songer à moi,
Qui ne songeai jamais à elle."

At some little distance from Thoury, in the obscure village of Janville, was born subsequently, another poet—Colardeau, whose name would have been long forgotten had he not turned into rhyme the story of "Héloïse and Abeilard," in imitation of Pope! This writer, for he can scarcely be called a poet, possessed no originality, but had considerable talent in imitating authors and adapting their works. He wrote "Caliste," in imitation of Rowe; "Armida and Rinaldo," from Tasso; composed a play, which he called "Astarbe," from "Télémaque;" and translated two cantos of Young's "Night Thoughts." As we have mentioned Colardeau, we will add an anecdote highly characteristic of his gentle, benevolent temper, not unmingled with a certain finesse and humour. Barthe, a contemporary writer, with whom he was on intimate terms, being about to bring out a comedy, was anxious to have his opinion upon its merits. Colardeau had been ill for some time, and Barthe found him *in extremis;* nevertheless, he read his play, and Colardeau listened patiently till he had finished, when he observed: "Il y a un trait essential que vous avez oublié dans votre pièce; c'est celui d'un auteur qui vient lire une comédie en cinq actes à un ami mourant." He was realising Horace's "Hirudo" with terrible truth.

When, however, poor Barthe was on *his* deathbed, his thoughtlessness was retributed with what we may call here *poetical* justice. As he lay dying, a friend called to see him, with an order for the first representation of Pacini's "Iphigenia in Tauris." "Mon cher ami," said the *moribond*, "on vient pour me porter à l'église, je ne puis aller à l'opera."

Barthe was a witty fellow, full of repartee, but of a capricious and impetuous temperament. "Il m'a fait trouver dans l'amitié," said of him a close friend, "tous les orages de l'amour."

the extent of the building and appurtenances, we find no reason to doubt it—that 1,800 workmen were employed on it during twelve years.

Speaking of the wondrously rich detail with which every portion of the architecture is filled up, Girault de Saint-Fargeau says—" . . . . les ornemens sont prodigués avec une telle profusion, les pilastres, les colonnes, les bas-reliefs, les frises y sont si richement sculptés, qu'on a peine à concevoir, après en avoir attentivement examiné le travail, admiré la délicatesse et la prodigieuse varieté des formes, que douze années aient pu suffire pour exécuter tant de chefs-d'œuvre de dessin et de sculpture."

Nevertheless, François was all eagerness to see the conclusion of his daring aspirations, and to enter into the fruition of his labours; the enormous sum of nearly 2,000,000 francs was expended upon it. The king constantly visited the works, stimulating the zeal of the men by his presence, and encouraging them by largesses adroitly distributed among the most industrious. As soon as only a part of the building was completed, the court repaired thither, and hunting was the order of the day. The meet and the return presented a magnificent spectacle, the king's retinue being on a scale of splendour, of which we can scarcely form an idea; and while the courtiers vied with each other in the costliness of their dress, the ladies added not a little to the show and the expense, by the luxury of their toilets.

In this regal edifice, architecture was supported by the sister-arts, and sculpture and painting contributed their choicest master-pieces to embellish it. Brilliant frescoes of Jean Cousin, and graceful compositions of Leonardo da Vinci adorned the walls, while the galleries were enriched with a collection of portraits of those learned men of Greece who took refuge in Italy when driven from the court of Constantine

Paleologus, after the taking of Constantinople, in 1454: Chambord also had its library.

The patronage with which François hailed the votaries of literature and art was even more liberal than his encouragement of those who ministered to his amusement and luxuries, and the payments of salaries and donations to the various professors of the Collége de France, which we find entered among his disbursements, are so many honourable attestations to the elevation of his tastes. Painting, sculpture, carving, modelling, were sure to meet with an intelligent appreciation, and the more useful domestic arts and manufactures were encouraged by generous protection. The valuable details, characteristic of François' private life, revealed to us in the old palace registers of the "Economies Royales," demonstrate the extent to which he was wont to foster all that could tend to aggrandise his epoch, whether in public works or in intellectual and industrial advancement. Whatever was new and ingenious at once engaged the attention of the monarch, and he was always ready to examine with interest any project that might be brought before him. The advance made in art and literature during his brilliant reign demands the gratitude of posterity, and we cannot but honour the memory of a sovereign whose exquisite taste and nice discrimination were commensurate with his power and his liberality. His numerous palaces were so many museums and storehouses of genius and skill brought to light and fostered by his encouraging approval and munificent patronage, and no king, whether before or since, ever so well understood or so practically developed this important portion of his duties.

As we survey, in the vastness of its extent and the costliness of its finish, this monument of the tastes and habits of such a king as François I., we wonder, while we regret, that the

modern Augustus should not have possessed at his court a Virgil who might have left us an epic on the inspiring subject.

We traverse corridors and "*escaliers dérobés,*" we open secret doors artfully concealed in the panellings, and are mystified by the strange, rambling disposition of the interior chambers; but while they puzzle, they explain to us by a very paradox, some of the mysteries of court-life under the monarch whose gallantries suggested such contrivances; and we understand how it was, that François I. was enabled to carry on his intrigue with Diane de Poitiers, without so much as arousing the suspicions of the Duchesse d'Etampes. The history of Chambord reveals to us a very florid picture of court-life under this licentious reign, which wanted all François' refinement of manners, cultivation of mind, and elevated tastes to gloss over the growing vices of the undercurrents of society, and to save it from the coarseness into which it degenerated under the succeeding sovereigns.

When the court removed from one palace to another, and the queen accompanied the king, Diane was not lodged in the château, and when at Chambord, occupied a pavilion constructed in the midst of the park, called l'Hôtel de Montmorency; thither the monarch resorted by a secret passage, in the strictest incognito, nightly, after he had retired; and as his visits always took place at a regular hour, Brissac, who had also captivated the capacious heart of the beautiful favourite, was enabled to take advantage of the intervening period to enjoy her society, without running the risk of encountering his royal rival.

In 1539, when Charles Quint passed through France, Chambord was one of the palaces where he was received by François with more than regal hospitality. Charles was amazed and delighted with Chambord, as (if we are to believe the French

chroniclers) he was with everything he saw in France, and declared it was "an epitome of the wonders that human genius and industry can effect."

During the last few years of failing health which preceded his end, François was frequently at Chambord; and it was late in that fatal year that, being seriously ill, and alarmingly depressed in spirits, the Queen of Navarre hastened thither, that she might console him; for this devoted sister, who had been his support and his moral physician during the malady brought on by his exile in Spain, was determined to exercise all her ingenuity in endeavouring to dissipate the melancholy which was consuming him. Her mind turned, with a flexibility which could only have been induced by her affectionate solicitude, to whatever could amuse or interest him. She sought to encourage his taste for letters, for this taste had been their common delight in their early years, and she hoped thus to bring him back to the contemplation of those pure, simple, and elevating pleasures from which they had once drawn the profoundest enjoyment. It was thus that, aided by her counsels, he projected and organised those augmentations and improvements in the Collége Royal, which made it so important an institution.

At this time it was that Saint-Gelais made his appearance at court as a poet; inferior in genius and ability, it is true, to Clement Marot, but of a far more discreet and circumspect character. If his writing was less polished, at all events he was smarter in impromptu, and his contemporaries were wont to style him "l'Ovide Français." The story goes, that once when the king was caressing a favourite horse, and as he patted and coaxed him, was addressing him,—

"Joli, gentil petit cheval,
Bon à monter, bon à descendre" . . . .

the king paused, at a loss for the next couplet, when Saint-Gelais added, with happy presence of mind,—

"Sans que tu ne sois un Bucéphal
Tu portes un plus grand qu'Alexandre."

The various distractions that Marguerite had contrived to introduce into the life of her royal brother only resulted in the partial removal of his depression; his very disposition seemed changed, and although still amiable and affable with those who were about him, he seemed unable to overcome the sadness which oppressed him, and would often give way to an irritability of temper, quite new to him. His humour, by a strange reverse of feeling, seemed chiefly to vent itself in invectives upon women, whom he had loved rather "too well" than "wisely," at the time that his sentiments towards them were collected from the "Roman de la Rose." Notwithstanding Marguerite's efforts to change the current of the king's thoughts, he continually recurred to this subject, and sometimes the conversation was very animated, as Marguerite piqued herself on the defence of her sex. Du Bellay says that one day, when the king had been indulging his humour upon this favourite theme—the general unworthiness of the sex—Marguerite took up the cause somewhat warmly, and after he had allowed her to speak uninterruptedly for some time, he only replied by writing with a diamond ring the two following verses on the window-pane:—

"Souvent femme varie—
Mal habil qui s'y fie."

There are two sequels to this story; we have no means of proving the authenticity of either, so briefly record both. They have one object in common, viz., to account for the disappearance of this celebrated pane of glass, which would have proved an interesting relic, had it remained in its place to our times.

The first is to the effect that as soon as Marguerite had read

the libel, she petulantly taunted him with the inconstancy of his own sex; to which he retorted by defying her to give him a single instance of fidelity in woman. "What say you, for instance," he continued, "to Emilie de Lagny?" Marguerite was silenced, for she was not prepared to deny the misconduct of this lady, whose recent elopement with her page was at that moment the subject of much court scandal, though up to that time she had been considered an example of virtue and modesty, daily visiting, with the most devoted affection, her husband, who was imprisoned on suspicion of treason. Marguerite, however, was put on her mettle, and trusting to her wits, answered at once, that if François would give her a month, she would prove Emilie's innocence. The king laughed heartily at her presumption, but accepted the proposal, and a considerable wager was staked upon the issue. The last day of the stipulated period was close at hand, and Marguerite was beginning to tremble for the issue, when she received an intimation from the imprisoned husband that he would furnish her the required proof, on condition of her obtaining for him a free pardon. Marguerite promised everything, and in return was informed of the state of the case by Emilie de Lagny herself, who, disguised in her husband's dress, had been passing for him in his prison, whence she had assisted him to escape in *her* attire, attended by her page. Marguerite was enchanted to find how successfully her rash bravado had succeeded; she obtained her wager, the Sieur de Lagny his pardon, and François, who avowed himself vanquished in this instance, generously withdrew his accusation by breaking the window on which it was inscribed.

The other version says that the challenge was never taken up, and that a century and a half later, the grave charge enunciated by François still stood where he had left it, undenied, when one day, Louis XIV. being on the spot with the

Duchesse de la Vallière, that lady pointed to it with indignant mortification, and reproachfully asked her royal lover if he could endure such a sentiment. Louis, *pour toute réponse*, thrust the point of his rapier through the glass, and, regardless of the historical curiosity and value of the ancestral relic, sacrificed it to the sex it maligned, out of compliment to his mistress.

François was again suffering in his health, and under the gentle care of his attached sister at Chambord, when took place one of those reverses of fortune which come when least expected; and in this case threatened serious consequences to France.

Charles Quint was then laying siege to Saint-Dizier, where the French general, Sancerre, commanded the garrison, and had determined, cost what it might, to hold out to the last extremity. The treatment that had been experienced by the inhabitants of Vitry at the hands of the emperor, subsequently to an assault, the conflagration of that unhappy town, and the cruelties practised by the enemy upon its unoffending inhabitants, in no way damped the courage of the men, who sought, on the contrary, to emulate the example of the defenders of Landrecy. But an act of perfidy, that Sancerre was far from suspecting, forced him to open his gates to the emperor. He had sent to the emperor's camp a negotiator, who, on his return, received a sealed letter purporting to come from the Duc de Guise, governor of the province. On opening it, Sancerre found to his dismay, that this prince informed the garrison it could not possibly be succoured, and that under the circumstances the king desired him immediately to surrender. Sancerre, grieved to the heart, was nevertheless bound to comply with the royal commands, and overwhelmed at this disappointing issue to his persevering struggle, threw open the gates. His despair may be imagined when he learned that the order he had so reluctantly obeyed was a forgery.

When the news reached Chambord, the king, who was

confined to his room, exclaimed—"Ah, mon Dieu! que tu me vends cher mon royaume que je pensais que tu m'eusses donné très libéralement; Ta volonté, pourtant soit faicte!" Then addressing Marguerite, who was seated beside his couch, he said—"Ma mignonne allez-vous en à l'église, à complies, et là, pour moi faites prière á Dieu, que puisque son vouloir est tel, d'aymer et favoriser l'Empereur plus que moi, qu'il le fasse au moins sans que je le voie campé devant ma capitale! Mais pourtant je suis resolu d'aller au-devant, le prévenir et lui donner bataille, où je prie Dieu qu'il me fasse mourir, plutôt que d'endurer une seconde prison." And, notwithstanding his bodily ailments, François kept his word in good earnest.

In 1545 François paid his last visit to Chambord, and as if, in the feverish restlessness that possessed him, he wished once more to breathe the air of those resorts of his own creation, where so many of the brilliant days of his reign had been spent, he made a hasty round of these western châteaux, arriving at and leaving them with morbid and unnatural hurry, and turning out of his way to go and die at Rambouillet, where he had merely thought to halt for a few hours!

When Henri II. came to the throne he continued the operations his father had left unfinished. The portion of Chambord which we owe to his reign is easily recognised by his cipher and the crescent moon, a combination of his own *dévise* with that of his mistress Diane de Poitiers: but Henri did not reside much here.

It was left to him, however, to give the finishing touch to that architectural marvel, the grand double spiral staircase which fills up the Tour de la Fleur-de-Lys, and has ever since been the wonder and admiration of every visitor to the Château de Chambord. Two persons can ascend this staircase side by side, as it were, can hear one another's discourse, and even converse,

without being able to see each other. The famous architect Blondel has thus described this curiosity, the elegance of which is as admirable as its construction is ingenious and rare. "We cannot speak too highly," he says, "of this *chef-d'œuvre;* the lightness of its design, the boldness of its execution, and the delicacy of its ornamentation, when perceived from the platform of the château, strike and astonish us, and hardly enable us to understand how so picturesque a design came to be conceived, or to be so successfully executed." Although, at first, as we have seen, this was the only staircase, twelve other grand staircases, and a number of smaller ones, cut in the thickness of the walls, give access to all the stories and all the apartments. The number of chimney-pieces amounts to 440, and it would be utterly beyond our power to describe the thousand ornaments scattered with lavish profusion over the interior and exterior of the building. The chapel also was completed by this king, and is well preserved. It is situated in the west tower, and contains within it an oratory, well worth examining.

After the premature death of Henri II., the young monarch François II., with his youthful queen, Mary Stuart, visited Chambord, but they did not remain there long. Catherine de Medicis accompanied the court, and occupied, when residing here, a room which still bears her name; this room communicates with the *campanile,* where, according to the tradition which pursues the memory of this mysterious queen, Catherine was wont to steal away to hold her consultations with the stars.

During this short reign the improvements at Chambord were discontinued, and when Charles IX. came to the throne he found it in the state in which his father had left it. Charles set to work with great activity; but in 1571, the funds running short, he was compelled to suspend the embellishments and additions he had undertaken.

Henri III. does not seem to have been attracted to Chambord, and it never was a very favourite residence with Catherine, so that the court never resorted thither during his time—for Henri, at least during the earlier part of his reign, was mainly influenced by his mother; indeed this fact became so notorious, that Palma Cayet tells us the following bitter pasquinade was placarded about the walls, in the name of the people :—

"Henri, par la grâce de sa mère, inerte roy de France et de Pologne imaginaire; concierge du Louvre, marguillier de St. Germain l'Auxerrois, basteleur des Eglises de Paris, gendre de Colas, goudronneur des colets de sa femme, et friseur de ses cheveux, mercier du Palais, visiteur des étuves, gardien des quatre mendians, père conscript des blancs-batteurs, et protecteur des capuchins."

Henri IV. paid rare visits to Chambord, preferring by far St. Germains and Fontainebleau, as being nearer Paris; but Louis XIII. sojourned there occasionally, for his love of the chase once more revived, though in a very modified form, the quasi-mediæval hunting-parties of François I.

It was here that a very innocent little flirtation took place between the devout young king and Mademoiselle de Hautefort, of both of whom history reports that they were equally "*sages.*" It appears that Louis found her one day on one of the terraces at Chambord reading a letter, which, on the king's approach, she hastily concealed in her neckerchief. Louis, whose curiosity was aroused, watched his opportunity, and with a mixture of license and prudery which is very characteristic, seized one corner of the paper which indiscreetly appeared, with a pair of pliers, for he was much too "proper" to have used his fingers for such a purpose, and possessed himself of the secret. What the paper contained, history does not reveal, though fiction has been very liberal in its details of this inci-

dent of court gossip. Mademoiselle de Hautefort was a tolerably important political personage. She was much attached to Louis's queen, Anne of Austria, whose lady-in-waiting she was, and Richelieu, fearing her influence with the queen, caused her to be removed from court; to this measure it was not difficult to obtain the king's consent, but on Anne's being declared Regent, she insisted on the recall of her favourite. Mademoiselle de Hautefort's continued opposition to Cardinal Mazarin, however, at length cost her the good graces of her mistress, and she left the court a second time. Ultimately she married the Maréchal de Schomberg, who had become a widower, and died at the age of seventy-five, in 1692.

Louis XIII., who had made Chambord his favourite residence after the exile of Mademoiselle de Lafayette, subsequently bestowed on his brother the domain, as an appanage, together with the Comté de Blois, and a portion of the eight years' exile of that prince was passed there.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, his daughter, gives in her memoirs, an account of her first visit to Chambord, while yet a child; she particularly describes the mysterious staircase, and the perplexity in which her father placed her by going up one set of steps while she went up the other, calling to her and laughing at her all the time, because she could not see him, nor imagine where he could be, for his voice seemed close to her ear, while he was invisible to her sight. Here it was, that when the playful child had become an impetuous and self-opiniated woman, and was called "La Grande Mademoiselle," she first beheld the captivating but treacherous Lauzun, and took it into her misguided head to fall in love with him and marry him, regardless of the opposition of all advisers, and in the teeth of the king's prohibition. She little dreamed that this pretended lover was courting her wealth and not herself, and that once

master of her large possessions, his base ingratitude would poison the remainder of her life.

Had not history recorded in her serious page the miserable tale of this unaccountable infatuation, we might doubt whether we were not perusing the inventions of some wild imagination. So powerful and constant was this unreciprocated affection of Mademoiselle for its worthless object, that she abandoned without hesitation to the young Duc de Maine, her duchy of Aumale, her Comté d'Eu, and her principality of Dombes, in exchange for his pardon, which Madame de Montespan, the duke's mother, had undertaken to obtain on those terms. Thus only it was, that Lauzun received his freedom, and escaped from his close incarceration at Pignerol. Lauzun had never loved his wife, and he was not even touched by this generous proof of her affection; far from it, although her altered appearance was due to the grief and anxiety she had suffered during his detention, he turned from her with disgust, and made no secret of his sentiments.

One day, when overwhelmed with despair at his neglect, she so far forgot both her womanly and her royal dignity as to throw herself at his feet, exclaiming, "Reviens à moi, qui t'aime tant," he had the brutality to reply, "Louise d'Orléans, tu as tort de pleurer, car tu te fais plus laide et plus ridée que tu ne l'es déjà."

The Duc de St. Simon and others give curious particulars of this unfortunate marriage, but as they are not connected with Chambord, we abstain from quoting them here.

In 1660, Gaston dying without male issue, Chambord reverted to the crown, and Louis XIV. now visited it for the first time, in the month of July, after his journey to the southern frontier of the Bidaçoa to meet his bride, Maria Teresa of Austria, daughter of Philip IV., and sister of Charles II. of

Spain. He returned thither frequently, and it became the scene of brilliant *fêtes.*

We have spoken of the curious staircase of the Château de Chambord, unique, we believe, in the world. At each stage this staircase abuts on a fourfold landing planned like a Greek cross, and forming four wide and lofty vaulted corridors, the ceilings of which were richly fretted, each compartment being adorned with the salamander surrounded by flames, picked out in gold. One of these chambers, Louis XIV. converted into a theatre, and here, in 1669, was performed for the first time, in presence of the court, Molière's "Pourceaugnac." This comedy, it seems, delighted the audience, who were by no means shocked at jokes and allusions which, in our day, would scandalize the very "groundlings:" they only perceived its merits! An anecdote respecting this performance is related by Brossette, which has been contradicted by other authors, to the effect that Lulli, having unfortunately given offence to Louis XIV., was very anxious to regain his good graces, and on the representation of M. de Pourceaugnac, having prevailed on Molière to let him perform the principal character, surpassed himself in comic efforts, but failed to draw a smile from his majesty; Lulli was in despair; but when in the last scene M. de Pourceaugnac is chased round the stage by the apothecaries, armed with their medical apparatuses, Lulli, after jumping over the tables and chairs, at last leapt over the footlights and alighted upon the harpsichord in the orchestra, which he smashed with his weight, the king was not proof against this humorous impromptu, and relenting, condescended to compliment Lulli upon his success. Lulli not only composed the music of the *divertissemens,* but added the Italian dialogue at the end of the first act. The part ordinarily performed by Lulli was that of one of the two grotesque doctors. His

name is found inscribed in the *dramatis personæ* of the original libretto, under the name of "*Il signor Chiacchierone.*"

The next year, 1670, the "Bourgeois Gentilhomme" was given to the same audience in the same place. The king manifested no sign of his opinion of this piece, and to the discomfiture of its author, even at his supper, said not a word to him on the subject. This silence on the part of the monarch was accepted by the courtiers as a token of disapprobation, and they immediately turned their backs upon Molière, and began to treat him as a man in disgrace. Barron, who was one of the performers, and to whom Molière confided his alarms on the occasion, says that they remarked upon his work with the utmost contempt, and that M. le Duc de —— said in his presence, "It is very impertinent of this fellow to pretend to entertain us, when he can produce nothing better than such poor stuff as this." "What does he mean to hint at with his *Halaba Balachon ?*" added M. le Comte de ——. "The poor man has taken leave of his senses," chimed in a third of these noblemen. "It is time he retired and left his place for some one who knows better how to please us."

The piece had been announced for repetition on the fifth day following, and as the king had not countermanded it, the performance took place. In the meantime, Molière, sadly mortified and perplexed, remained out of the way. He feared to encounter his censors, and contented himself with sending Barron to reconnoitre. His envoy, however, only brought him bad news: the whole court had mutinied.

When the second representation was over, the king sent for Molière, and said to him, "I did not wish to pronounce any opinion on your piece on its first performance, for I thought I might have been misled by the way in which it was given; but

I may now tell you, Molière, that on both occasions I have been equally delighted with it. Indeed, you have never yet done anything which has pleased me so much; and you may regard your piece as a decided success."

Molière listened, and as these words fell from the king's lips, he breathed again for the first time since his disappointment. With the royal favour, returned the sunshine of the whole court; it was now who should be most forward to laud him; and the very same duke who had before taken the lead in condemning him, now declared him "inimitable," and affirmed that "there was in all he wrote a *vis comica* which no one who had preceded him had ever attained"—

"Sequitur fortunam ut semper et odit
Damnatos." . . . .

Lulli again composed the music for the *divertissemens*, and sang in the part of the mufti in the "Turkish Ceremony."

Pelisson, in a humorous letter of mingled verse and prose, addressed to Mademoiselle de Scuderi, supplies the details of this incident. It is conveyed in the midst of a graceful description of Chambord and its park, with ingenious allusions to the "royales amours dont ses arbres touffus avaient été les discrets confidents et les muets témoins."

Louis XIV. both pillaged and disfigured Chambord. He carried to Versailles many of its beautiful and appropriate decorations, and in order to find room for his retinue, he made additions to the building in the worst possible taste; he covered the roof with unsightly *mansardes*, at the instigation of his favourite architect, Mansard, who has immortalised his name in the history of *Attic* architecture. Much of this has happily been removed; but the traces of his barbarous taste are not effaced.

Under the reign of Louis XV., Chambord became the resi-

dence of his Polish father-in-law, Stanislas Leckzinski. This king, accepting the dictum of the Regent, "La France a toujours été l'asile des Rois malheureux," occupied it during eight years, giving, together with his virtuous queen, an edifying example to all the neighbourhood. Their memory has long been held in veneration there. Confiding too implicitly in the events which seemed to presage his restitution to the throne of Poland, Stanislas quitted Chambord in August, 1733. Vanquished and proscribed, he returned thither to await the conclusion of the Treaty of Vienna, which conferred on him thenceforth, in the place of his royal rank, no more than titular sovereignty. Proscribed, he succeeded in escaping through many dangers and in various disguises, his head being put at a price in his own country by the Muscovites. In 1736, he returned to his refuge at Chambord, and in exchange for the nominal title of king of Poland, he accepted the sovereignty for life of the duchies of Bar and Lorraine. Here he showed the valuable qualities he possessed, and, by his excellent government and paternal sympathy in the interests of his subjects, endeared himself even to those conservatives who had at first objected to a foreign rule. He died by an accident, his dressing-gown having taken fire. The shock acting upon his constitution—already weakened by wounds received in war—produced a fever, from which he did not rally; his death was universally mourned.

In 1748, the Château de Chambord passed to Maréchal Saxe, the king rewarding his victory at Fontenoy with this munificent gift. The Maréchal led here a military life; and although pretty nearly worn out with long-continued excesses, crowned by a mysterious duel with the Prince de Condé, he determined to take all the advantage and enjoyment he could out of so brilliant a position. It was a fine place for the exercise of his military tastes, which survived the period of active service, and

he consequently daily passed his men in review in these extensive grounds, and surveyed the manœuvres of his two regiments of *Hulans*, which the king had left him, together with five pieces of cannon.

"The Maréchal," says Monsieur Merle, "was terribly severe in his discipline, and used to have his Hulans hung for the slightest breach of order. There still remains at Chambord the stump of an elm at the end of the *Place d'Armes*, which served for these executions. It was struck by lightning in the month of May, 1820. He had established in the park a stud of fiery Ukraine horses, so admirably trained that of their own accord they made their way to the *Place d'Armes*, on the signal being sounded from the upper terrace of the château."

The victor of Fontenoy, lodged in this vast palace, began to fancy himself a king. He held his court there, and aped royalty in the minutest particulars. He built a theatre, and Favart and his company were appointed to come at regular periods, and give their dramatic representations. He had his courtiers, his "grand couvert," and his mistresses, was surrounded by old companions-in-arms, patronised writers and artists, who accordingly flocked to his table, and it soon became very evident that his vanity was flattered by the homage he received. He went so far as to place a sentinel before the door of the suite of rooms he occupied, and affixed the words "Caisse Militaire," over the door which led from his dining-hall to his reception-room. The Maréchal de Saxe was an illustrious warrior; but his military ability does not excuse his licentious life. He died here in 1750.

In 1777 the family of Polignac obtained the use of Chambord from Louis XVI., and in 1797 it was granted, with the brevet of duke, to Pichegru, by Louis XVIII., as the price of his treason. In 1799 it was, with the sanction of Paul I., transferred to Barras by the same prince.

When the revolution broke out, Chambord had already reverted to the crown. It was expensive to maintain, and there seemed to be no use to which it could be put, it was therefore proposed to dismantle and demolish it. The first part of this threat was promptly executed, and the furniture was sold by auction; nothing was left within the bare walls but the table of lias-stone on which the body of the Maréchal de Saxe had been embalmed. The project of demolition was abandoned on finding that the charge for destroying the *fleurs-de-lys*, and other royal insignia, would amount to 100,000 francs: however, the same reason,—viz., want of funds,—which preserved it from new mutilations, likewise militated against any attempt at restoring it. When Napoleon I. became emperor, he placed both Chambord and Fontainebleau under the protection of the Legion of Honour, and, in order to preserve it from destruction of one kind, he exposed it to danger of another description, converting it into a barrack, and establishing there the fifteenth cohort of the legion commanded by General d'Augerau. Later, Napoleon thought of fitting it up as a domicile for the Spanish princes, but abandoned the idea on finding it would cost 3,000,000 francs to fit it up. In 1809 he re-united it to the crown property, and gave it, as a national recompense, to Berthier, Prince of Wagram, with 500,000 francs rental, taken from the navigation of the Rhine, on condition that all the revenues produced by the land should be expended on the castle. This condition was accepted, but it was not acted upon. Then came the reign of Louis XVIII. The Wagram family retained the château and dependencies of Chambord unmolested, though the prince himself had departed this life.

The Princess de Wagram cut down the timber, disfigured the park, and let the place, with the right of hunting, to an

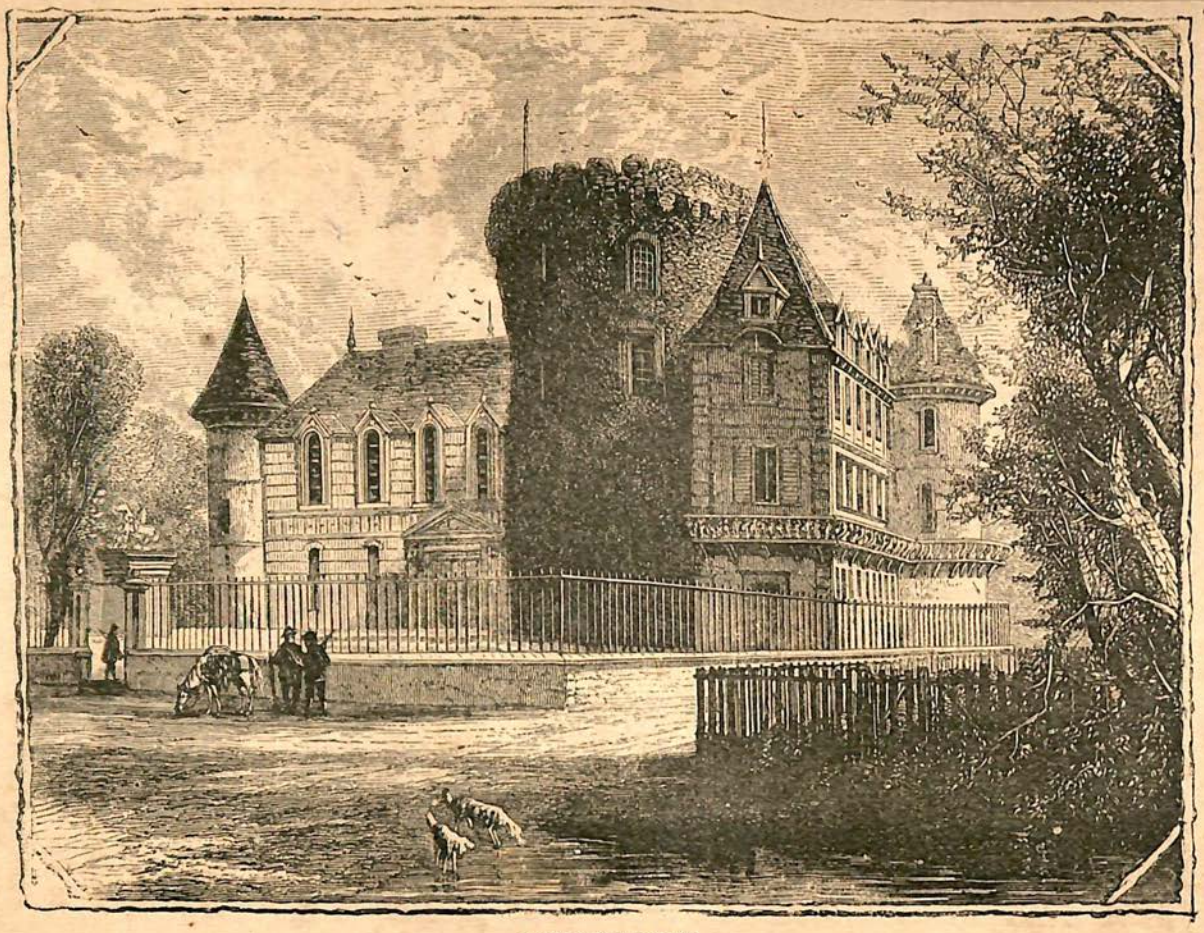
Englishman, who committed there all possible excesses. He seems to have used, and to have allowed others to use, the great tower as a mark to fire at, for the old stones are defaced with the dents of their balls. Berthier's widow obtained permission to sell this onerous estate, which, like a "white elephant," threatened to devour all her means, when Comte Adrien de Calonne, hearing it was in the market, proposed it should be purchased by national subscription, and presented to the Duc de Bordeaux. On the 6th March, 1821, the domain was rescued from the *bande noire*, who were eager to possess it, and adjudicated to the author of this loyal project for the sum of 1,542,000 francs, "pour en être fait homage," says the act of sale, "in the name of France, to S. A. R., Mgr. le Duc de Bordeaux." This project, when first started, gave rise to an inimitably witty pamphlet by Paul Louis Courier, to dissuade the inhabitants of Chambord from contributing to this requisition.

The Duc de Bordeaux, strange to say, has never seen the *terre de Chambord*, of which he has nevertheless assumed the name, since he has been compelled by the revolution to quit France. Previously to that revolution he was too young to take an interest in it, but in 1828 Madame la Duchesse de Berri, his mother, visited the place: she laid upon the terrace of the oratory the first stone of an intelligent restoration, which was to consolidate those portions of the edifice threatening ruin, and to replace those which time or violence had shaken, and, above all, to remove all the tasteless additions made by Louis XIV. Unfortunately, the prince's means have never admitted of organizing the repairs on the scale they required, though at the time of our visit we were told that for years the whole of the incomings had been spent on maintaining the edifice.

Chambord, therefore, sad to say, is a ruin, but such a ruin as eminently to deserve the attention of the cultivated tourist, to whom it presents features and associations of the greatest interest. In 1830 the Government of July had sequestrated the domain of Chambord, and had taken possession of it in the name of the state. After a suit which lasted twenty years, the rights of the Duc de Bordeaux were definitively established, and, such as it now stands, Chambord is still his.

RAMBOUILLET.

Its Inferiority in Point of Architecture—Description—Early History—The d'Angennes Family; Treachery of Jean; Bribed by the English—Cardinal de Rambouillet—Claude d'Angennes—Curious Feudal Tenure—Last Illness of François I.—Death of the Dauphin—Death of Henry VIII. of England; its Effect on François; his restlessness; sudden Changes of Plans; Halts at Rambouillet; his Condition on arriving; strange Determination to Hunt; Physical Weakness; Du Bellay's Account of his Death; his Advice to his Son, Henri III. —Marguerite's Anxiety and Distress—François' Widowed Queen, Eléonore; what her Life had been—Pierre du Castelau's Funeral Oration; its Consequences—Catherine de Médicis at Rambouillet—Incident on the Day of the Barricades, 1588—Popularity of the Guises—Charles d'Angennes, Marquis de Rambouillet—Catherine de Vivonne—Hôtel de Rambouillet; its History—Mdlle. de Scudery's Description: Sauval's—Catherine's Innovations—The "*Salon Bleu*"—Arthénice —Institution of the "*Salon Bleu;*" how frequented—Julie d'Angennes—Degeneracy of the Salon Bleu; how criticised—"*Beaux Esprits and Précieuses*"—Les Précieuses Ridicules—Anecdotes of the *Habitués* of the "*Salon Bleu*"—Children of Catherine de Vivonne—The Duc de Montausier; Preceptor of the "*Grand Dauphin;*" his fine Character; courts Julie d'Angennes for Fourteen Years; marries her—M. de Grignan—Le Nain de la Princesse Julie—The Bouquet de Julie—Family of the Duc and Duchesse de Montausier—The Château changes Hands—Rambouillet under the Duc de Penthièvre; under Louis XIV.; under Marie Antoinette; under Napoleon I.—Anecdotes—The Use of Presentation Volumes—Napoleon an Exile—Rambouillet under Louis XVIII.; under Charles X.



RAMBOUILLET.

CHATEAU DE RAMBOUILLET.

"L'homme est presque toujours gouverné par les circonstances, c'est rarement qu'il les dirige."—VOLTAIRE.

"True wit hath its walks and purlieus, beyond which it may not stray so much as an hair's breadth, upon pain of being lost."—BACON.

THE châteaux we have been visiting acquire so much of their interest from the part taken in their construction, and contributed to their history, by François I., and the details which these histories supply bring us into such near intimacy with the private life of that monarch, that we propose to carry our readers to the scene of his death.

Geographically speaking, Rambouillet is, undoubtedly, out of its place here, but we willingly turn to the page in our note-book which records our visit to that spot, to introduce it to the notice of our readers. As an architectural monument, Rambouillet must hide its diminished head; the neighbouring palaces of Fontainebleau and Versailles completely eclipse its appearance, and it sinks into nothingness by comparison with those extensive and gorgeous edifices. Rambouillet is very irregularly built, and the materials employed are partly bricks and partly stone. The ground-floor is low, and above the first and principal story is only the "*grenier*." All the chambers within, are irregular and unsymmetrical in their shape, owing to the irregularity of the external elevation: the entrance is a modern addition; the court is small and narrow, but the gardens are tastefully laid out, their principal ornament being

a large piece of water, which, we were told, measures about forty-five hectares.

To the artist this building cannot be said to present a very attractive subject, though it possesses many advantages, if they are looked for; thus there are certain perspective aspects of it which make an exceedingly pleasing and interesting picture; the form, no less than the tone of colour, is heavy, and both require the aid of a bright sky, and the sunshine of a summer's day, to make an agreeable impression. Thus was it when we had the good fortune to make our first acquaintance with Rambouillet, and our recollection of that grand forested domain, the nucleus of which is the storied old red brick pile, was to us an inspiring one.

The early cylindrical tower, crenellated and machicolated, constituting the donjon-keep of feudal times, surrounded by Gothic turrets and Renaissance constructions, supplies an outline, the chief characteristic of which is a picturesque irregularity, while the noble old trees which shelter it, maintain its princely aspect.

With respect to the early history of this ancient manor, it is that of all feudal castles, and offers no distinctive peculiarity. We have the ordinary routine of fierce contests and dearly-bought victories, alliances between rival families, cessions and changes of ownership from various causes, and, as the sequel to a confused and indistinct succession, Rambouillet becomes, in 1388, the property of Regnault d'Angennes, *écuyer* at the Court of Charles VI. At this point begins the interest of its history. Regnault increased his territory considerably by the purchases of several adjoining fiefs, and by the intelligent management of his resources, he became one of the most powerful *seigneurs* of his province. The kingdom was at this time subjected to disputes and party-hostilities, but during these the

fidelity of D'Angennes to his royal master was unshaken. The king, Charles V., who appreciated the attachment of this powerful nobleman, recognised it by conferring upon his son, Jean d'Angennes, the governorship of Cherbourg.

Shortly after this young man's assumption of office, the place was attacked by the English. Jean defended it bravely for some time; but he was not of a firm character, and having shown symptoms of irresolution, the besieging party ventured to tempt his fidelity with a bribe. Strange to say, Jean, although the scion and representative of a noble and loyal family, did not resent the proposal as an insult, and a very little persuasion sufficed to induce him to forget his honour and his king. Notwithstanding the disgrace which he must have known was inseparable from such a traitorous proceeding, Jean seems to have concerned himself solely as to how he could enjoy in security the price of his treachery; he therefore demanded, over and above the stipulated concessions, a safe conduct, to enable him to remain without apprehension in the enemy's territory, and thus thought himself exempt from all penalty. At the expiration of the prescribed period, however, he, in his turn, became the victim of the perfidy of those to whose interests he had sold the honour of his hitherto untarnished name. He was seized by their emissaries, condemned without trial, and summarily beheaded. As far as retribution went, no course could be more just, but his punishment should have been administered by other hands, and his assassination became a blot upon the fame of the foes who had betrayed him.

Jean d'Angennes left a son, also called Jean (*deuxième du nom*), who, by his loyalty and high character, effaced from his scutcheon the stain his father's defection had left upon it. He was attached to the person, as well as to the cause, of the king, and distinguished himself by his intrepidity among the

defenders of the monarchy under Charles VII.: indeed, with the one exception we have named, the D'Angennes family has always been distinguished in the pages of history for the courage and loyalty they have displayed.

In the middle of the sixteenth century we find the annals of Rambouillet illustrated by the lives of two brothers, the elder being known as Cardinal de Rambouillet, and distinguished (among the various services he rendered to the country and the church) by the part he took in the famous council of Trent. He was appointed to the bishopric of Mans by Charles IX., and was made cardinal under Pius II., to whom he had been sent as ambassador. Sixtus V., impressed with his high principles and firmness of character, gave him the government of Corneto, a position of which he proved himself in every way worthy. The duties it required of him were very responsible, and the abuses he was required to extirpate were difficult to deal with; the zeal with which he prosecuted the task, undermined his health, and he died, some say of poison, at Corneto, aged fifty-six. It was during his episcopate that the Calvinists attacked and took the city of Mans, pillaging the cathedral church of St. Julien.

His brother Claude d'Angennes, born also at Rambouillet, became *conseiller-clerc* of the parliament of Paris in 1565. He was employed three years after, on a mission to Cosmo de Medicis, Grand-duke of Tuscany, was honoured with the title of counsellor of state, nominated Bishop of Noyon in 1577, and ten years later, on the death of his brother Charles, Bishop of Mans, he established a seminary in this latter place, and died much beloved and respected, in 1601.

Claude d'Angennes has left a pamphlet inveighing against the crime of Jacques Clement.

Among the feudal rights which attached to the Château de Rambouillet was one which entitled its lord to receive, in

virtue of a very curious ceremony, the expression of fealty and homage as Seigneur de Montorgueil. The substance of the document which sets forth the details of this act thus prescribes the mode in which it is to be performed:—

"On the morrow of Easter-day each year, the Seigneur de Montorgueil, now Seigneur de Rambouillet, is to repair to the spot where formerly stood the Château de Montorgueil, and there to receive from the Prieur de St. Thomas d'Epernon in person, or duly represented, fealty and homage.

"He must be booted and spurred, and must wear a sword at his side, and across his breast a white scarf, crossed by another scarf woven of white periwinkles, with a coronet of white periwinkles on his bare head, and new white gloves on his hands. Thus equipped, he is to be mounted on a horse, which is to have white feet, and is to be saddled with a pack-saddle, and in front of the rider is to be a round glass bottle covered with osier and filled with wine; the prior, or his *procureur*, is likewise to be furnished with a large cake made with the flour of a *minot* of wheat, and encircled with white periwinkles."

This cavalier, thus accoutred and equipped, is to present himself at the spot where formerly was the principal gate or entrance to the Château de Montorgueil, and to enquire three times, in a loud and audible voice, "Monseigneur de Montorgueil, are you present, or is there any one here who represents you?" As soon as he has been answered to the effect that the seigneur is not there, but that his officers are there for him, the prior states the purpose for which he is there; when the cake is carried to the "*procureur fiscal*," who distributes it to the officers of justice of Montorgueil; the bottle of wine is given to any one selected to receive it, and the usher takes the white gloves from the hands of him who has done the homage and keeps them, with the consent of the superior officers.

Besides these formalities, a saddler and a blacksmith are to be brought, on behalf of either party, to examine, with minute attention, the costume and accessories of both horse and rider; for if there should be wanting as much as a shoe-nail to the horse, or the smallest tag to his harness and equipments, the horse would be confiscated, and a year's tithes, given along with the said fealty and homage, would be forfeited, as well as the *muid de blé* of which the cake is made, and the value of the *muid de blé* is to be taken at sixty livres.*

The event which has most largely contributed to the historical celebrity of the Château de Rambouillet is the death of François I., which, by a singular and unforeseen fatality, took place in a chamber, still to be seen, in the round tower.

A number of adventitious circumstances had contributed to aggravate the failing state of the king's health. He had never entirely recovered from the shock of the dauphin's premature death, and the sudden demise of his third son Charles, Duke of Orleans, had also affected him most sensibly. This young prince was passing through Abbeville, where, not approving of the accommodation provided for him, he determined on removing to a more convenient abode. His attendants assured him that some one had just died of the plague there. "Bah!" answered the reckless young prince—who, be it observed, was not very strong in the history of his country—"on n'a jamais ouï dire qu'un fils de France seroit mort de la peste!" and having insisted on braving the danger, took the fatal malady, and died in a few days, to his father's inconsolable grief.

Another death, which was scarcely less severely felt by the king, happened about this time. It was that of the Duc d'Enghien, victor of Cérisolles, who, being only about twenty-six years of age, went to pass some time at Roche-Guyon,

* These curious particulars will be found in Hurtault and Magny's "Dictionnaire Historique."

where he was exercising himself in such games as suited with his military exploits.

On a fine day, in the month of February, desirous of showing that he knew as well how to defend as how to attack, he undertook to maintain a sham siege within the house he was occupying: the only arms to be employed were snow-balls. In a moment in which the besieging party had been repulsed, he attempted to make a *sortie;* but scarcely had he crossed the threshold of the door, when a coffer, thrown in sport from a window above, fell upon his head. The blow proved fatal, and he died on the 23rd November, 1546.

This accident, which he only survived some days, shed a universal gloom over the court, and François was still under its saddening influence, when a scarcely less impressive incident came to deepen his melancholy. This was the death of Henry VIII., which, although he had been long ill, took place, almost unexpectedly, in January, 1547. Henry and François had been contemporaries and friends; they had never had any serious quarrel, and their intimacy and good fellowship had been cordial, especially on François' side. François, on receiving the news, was struck with a strange presentiment, which he could not shake off. "Our lives," he said, "have been singularly similar: he was, by a very few years, my senior; I shall not long survive him;" and he continually recurred to the event.

It was in the beginning of March, in this same year, that François, rendered fractious and restless by the complaint that was consuming him, was hurrying from Loches to St. Germain-en-Laye. He had been seeking distraction by travelling from palace to palace during many months, vainly hoping to find, in continual change of scene, a relief from the gloom and despondency of his impending fate. To St. Germains he had resolved to go, although Limours was the place at which he

had originally intended to pass the Carnival. Now, all the *fêtes* and banquets, the masquerades and processions, the balls and games, were to be held at St. Germains; the king was to appear in a fancy costume; the music, the lights, the company, the stir, and the bustle—it was plain, he persuaded himself—would distract him, and make him forget his apprehensions and his sufferings.

On his way to St. Germains, however, he suddenly gave a new order to the cavalcade to turn out of its road and make for Rambouillet, where it, all at once, occurred to him he would take a few days' hunting, forgetting that it was now long since he had been in any way able to bear exercise, or even to suffer an allusion to that once favourite sport. Alas! how are the mighty fallen! This great and powerful prince—powerful in his *physique* as in his sway—was no more than the wreck of a man and the shadow of a king. The strain of constant suffering had wrought his nerves to such a pitch of sensitiveness, that he would start with an exclamation of impatient anger and a look of childish alarm at any sudden sound: the barking of a dog, the cawing of a rook, or even the howling of the wind were intolerable to him; and while desiring to be driven with the greatest rapidity, he would complain of the annoyance occasioned by even the gentlest movement. Despotic in his will, François' behests became contradictory and tyrannical, for even his native courtesy at times forsook him. The royal commands, however, no matter how unreasonable, must be obeyed; and on this occasion the destination of the *cortége* was at once altered. Arrived at Rambouillet, the king, exhausted with the rapidity of his journey, on which he had nevertheless himself insisted, was carried to a couch, whence he now began to feel he should probably never rise. The predictions of Ambroise Paré, pronounced some months previously, and his own judgment, had told him that all must soon be over for him; and he was in a

measure prepared for the event that now seemed imminent, for all who surrounded him recognised its fatal indications. He again now expressed a wish to be carried to St. Germains; and the attempt to remove him was made, but was soon abandoned as impossible: the king was disappointed: Rambouillet was at best but a hunting-seat, where the accommodation was rough and insufficient compared with the ease and luxury that could be commanded in the suburban palace. However, he resolved to remain only one night, and tried to believe that after a few hours' rest he could prosecute his original journey, and at least be within call of the skilful physicians and surgeons of the capital. The next morning at daybreak the idea of the hunt was again uppermost in his mind. The blast of the horn, so long the sweetest music in his ears, once more, and for the last time, awakens in his heart the joyous recollections of youth. "He commands," says his historian, "une chasse infernale, avec des meutes, contre le sanglier et le cerf." It was the last expiring effort of a strong man reluctant to part with his strength, and grasping his own will as long as he had life to hold it—"the ruling passion strong in death;" for he returned from the over-excitement of this supreme effort more dead than alive. François was borne from the saddle to his bed—that bed whence he was destined never again to rise; for, at Rambouillet, the meanest of his palaces—the great, the luxurious, the magnificent, the noble François I. was doomed to die! "Et sic," says Paulo Jovio, "maximus orbis rex, in infimo, totius Galliæ, vico periit."

In the midst of the delirium that preceded his death, François seemed to see passing in review before his disordered sight the errors of his reign and the scandals of his life. He raved wildly about them, and then, recovering his composure, determined to "make amends by a good death." Du Bellay tells us he received with resignation the information that his end was

at hand, and asked for the succours of religion, which, notwithstanding his numerous errors, he had never abandoned. Moreover, he expressed the deepest contrition for the sins into which he had been drawn by his passions. He then called for the Dauphin, Prince Henri, his now sole surviving son, and gave him his dying counsels. "Children," said the expiring monarch, "should imitate the virtues and not the vices of their parents. The French," he continued, "are the best nation in the world, and you ought to treat them with consideration and gentleness; for when their sovereign is in need they refuse him nothing. I recommend you, therefore, to apply yourself in every way to relieve them as far as you can of burdensome imposts!" It is true that François had in his latter years adopted this policy; but, up to within a very short time his conduct had been based on an altogether opposite system. However, notwithstanding the profuse luxury of his reign, his numerous wars and extravagant court, he left no debts, and in the treasury a sum equivalent to 6,000,000 francs. He gave Henri other advice, but laid special stress on that which touched the Guises; and he repeated several times that he must be upon his guard with the house of Lorraine—"qui pouvait mettre les enfants royaux en pourpoint et tous leurs sujets en chemise."* These were the last words François spoke distinctly. He expired in the arms of his faithful servant and friend, Jacques d'Angennes, on the 31st March, 1547, aged only fifty-three, having reigned thirty-three years.

* Du Bellay likewise states that François I. predicted that the house of Guise would one day prove too much for his successors, and the tradition, maintained by the dread the royal house always entertained of the growing influence of this family, was turned into a distich, which some have erroneously attributed to Charles IX.

"François premier prédit ce poinct,
Que ceux de la maison de Guise
Mettroient ses enfans en pourpoinct
Et son pauvre peuple en chemise."

While François lay expiring at Rambouillet, Marguerite, his attached sister, was unhappily in Béarn, herself chained to a bed of sickness: her anxiety respecting him was aggravated by the impossibility of being near him; still, as the real extent of his danger had been concealed from her, she was not without hope of his recovery. Du Bellay relates that she said to those who surrounded her, "Whoever shall come to me to announce the recovery of the king my brother, let him be whomsoever he will, and however *harassé, fangeux, ou mal-propre*, I will embrace and even kiss him as if he were the properest gentleman or prince in France; and if he could find no other bed whereon to rest, I would give him my own, and sleep on the floor, to acknowledge such news as he should have brought me." But Marguerite's anxiety increasing, she at length made up her mind to go to him, and was on the point of starting, when she was met by the terrible news that the companion of her childhood, the friend of her life, the brother of her heart, was no more! Marguerite never recovered the shock of this loss, and continued inconsolable—ever lamenting that she had not been near to receive her brother's latest breath. "Elle en fit," says Brantôme, in his quaint phraseology, "des lamentations si grandes, des regrets si cuisans, qu'oncques puis s'en remit, et ne fit jamais plus son profit." Du Bellay adds that, "renouncing those illusions which had formerly dazzled, without, however, altogether misleading her, she withdrew into a convent in Angoumois, where, giving herself up to practices of piety, she found the only relief of which her grief was capable. Du Breuil relates that he has often seen her perform the office of abbess, and sing with the nuns at mass and vespers. She survived François only two years, and died in 1549.

The melancholy Spanish princess whom François had married as his second wife—and who, while possessing his esteem, had

never succeeded in winning his love—requested permission to return to her family, and, after passing some time with her brother, Charles Quint, in Spain, went to reside at Talavera, where she died, universally regretted, in 1558.

This queen was very hardly used, indeed she gained very little advantage, and no happiness, by her marriage with the most admired and most magnificent prince in Europe. Du Bellay gives a graphic, not to say touching account, of this episode in the life of François. "In May, 1530, François," he says, "repaired to the frontiers of Spain to receive his betrothed wife and the little hostages, his sons, whose detention in a foreign land had been the price of their father's liberty. The difficulties raised by the emperor's officers inspired him with the gravest anxiety; and it was only after much delay and many apprehensions, that he was at length permitted to embrace his boys, and to testify to their future step-mother the gratitude he felt for the judicious and affectionate care she had lavished upon them during the four years of their detention at her brother's court. It was, however, impossible for the king," says Du Bellay, very coolly, "to offer to this virtuous princess any other sentiment, Mademoiselle d'Heilly being sole mistress of his heart; and yet Eleanor was beautiful. She united with distinguished manners and a cultivated mind the most amiable attributes of her sex; and when she appeared at court, every one thought she would withdraw her husband from a *liaison* which, until his second marriage, had been treated with indulgence. She was welcomed with so much more enthusiasm that she was regarded as the token of an enduring peace. Her disposition, full of gentleness and goodness, led people to expect that she would prompt the king to tolerance of the new opinions; and their partizans founded great hopes upon her."

Théodore de Bézé, who was to take so much part in the

schism with which the church was threatened, wrote upon her an ingenious distich, in which he compared her destiny to that of Helen of Greece—

> "Utraque formosa est, sed re tamen altera major,
> Illa serit lites, Helionora fugat."

"The queen watched the tendencies of the court of France, and she was soon convinced that it would be in vain to seek to inspire the king with sentiments which he already owed her on so many accounts. Widow of Emanuel, king of Portugal, by whom she had had one daughter, naturally grave, according to her national disposition, already thirty-two years of age, she felt she had none of the attractions of a beautiful girl of three-and-twenty to offer to the king, who was already deeply enamoured of the charms of one she could in no way rival. She resolved, therefore, to centre her happiness in the fulfilment of her duty. Taking for her model the good Queen Claude, whose memory was held in veneration, she treated the children of that princess as if they had been her own, and relinquished all political interference, except when she could act as peacemaker and mediatrix between her husband and her brother. François was touched by her noble and virtuous conduct, and treated her with the greatest consideration; but he was more than ever enamoured of Mademoiselle d'Heilly, who, having felt somewhat apprehensive of the rivalry of the queen, had redoubled her efforts to enchain her lover."

This quotation will afford an idea of the description of life led by the gentle Eleanor at the court of a husband who was only so in name, and whence she must have retired, on his death, without any very bitter regrets for the position she had lost.

The king's head, according to symbolical usage, was deposited with a religious order, while his body was carried with great

pomp to St. Denis, and buried within the gorgeous tomb we have all seen and admired. With him were carried his two sons, who had as yet only received a temporary sepulture.

Pierre Castelau, or Du Châtel, Bishop of Mâcon—one of the most learned men of his time, and who had been successively professor at Dijon, secretary of an ambassador in Rome, professor in the island of Cyprus, corrector of the press at Bâle, curator at Cairo, interpreter at Constantinople, and finally, reader and librarian to the king, with whom he had been chiefly instrumental in bringing about the foundation of the "Collége Royal"—was appointed to preach his funeral oration. In his discourse, while expressing his eulogium of this prince, he said that "his death had been so pious and edifying, that he considered it as certain that his soul had been wafted direct to paradise without needing the purification of the fire of purgatory."

This assertion scandalised some of the audience. They denounced it to the University, which pronounced it heretical, and decreed that a deputation should be formed, who should carry a complaint on the subject to the king, demanding that the orator should be punished. John Mendoza, a Spaniard, known for his humour, and "premier maître d'hôtel," was appointed to receive the doctors and introduce them. When they presented themselves, he began by regaling them, and then, coming to the subject of their visit, he said :—"I think, gentlemen, I know what you have come to do here. If I mistake not, it is to debate with *M. le Grand Aumônier*, as to the place where now resides the royal soul of the late king, our excellent master ? If you will leave it to me to decide—and I imagine I know him better than any other man in the world—I can assure you that he was not of a disposition to make a long stay *any*where, however agreeable he might find it ; so that if he was ever in purgatory, he must have left it long before this. The utmost he will have tarried for, may have been to taste their

wine *en passant*, according to his well-known and laudable custom."

This sarcasm had the good effect of enlightening the doctors; they understood that they were on the point of making themselves very foolish, by taking up a futile dispute in which the laugh would be against them, and they had the wisdom to abandon the subject. Du Châtel was made Grand Aumônier the following year.

In 1562 Catherine de Medicis repaired to Rambouillet, taking with her, her son, Charles IX., to await the issue of the battle of Dreux, in which the Catholics were led by the Duc de Guise, and the Huguenots by the Prince de Condé. Guise was victorious, and took Condé prisoner. "On the night after the battle," says "Murray's Handbook," on what authority we cannot discover, "the two princes slept side by side in the same couch—albeit mortal enemies." We do not find this circumstance mentioned by Pierre de l'Estoile, who, nevertheless, gives a very minute account of the incidents that accompanied it, and of which he was eye-witness.

On the memorable day of the barricades, 12th May, 1588, the king observed indications which made him resolve on escaping the fury of the populace; and indeed it was time, for, "as the Duc de Guyse crossed the street," says the "Journal de Henri III.," "it was who should shout most vociferously, '*Vive Guyse!*' until he, majestically waving his hand, and with mock humility lowering his broad-brimmed hat, said, "Mes amis, c'est assez; messieurs, c'est trop; criez, '*Vive le Roy!*'" "The next morning," continues the chronicler, "the king, having consulted with the queen-mother, walked privately out of the Louvre, with a little riding-whip in his hand, as if he were going for a walk, according to his custom; but he went straight to the Tuileries, and having heard that all the precautions he had taken were of no avail,

and that Guise had collected on his side 1,200 men, and was coming to seize him, proceeded to the royal stables, and mounting his horse, ordered his suite to mount also. Du Halde put on his majesty's boots, and was about girding on his sword, when he found he had it on the wrong way. "It is all one," said the king, "I am not going to see my mistress; I have a much longer journey to take." Being in the saddle, he turned towards the city, and swore he would only re-enter it by the breach. He took the direction of St. Cloud, rode straight on to Rambouillet, and slept there without undressing or taking off his boots. The next day he proceeded to Chartres, where he dined, remaining there until the last day of May."

The Château de Rambouillet continued to descend with unbroken regularity from father to son, in the *famille d'Angennes*, until it came to Charles d'Angennes, third in descent from Jacques d'Angennes, the illustrious châtelain, in whose arms the great monarch François I. had expired.

Charles d'Angennes, Marquis de Rambouillet, was Lord High Steward to Louis XIII., and married, in 1660, Catherine de Vivonne, only daughter of the Marquis de Pisani, one of the most remarkable women of her time, and as distinguished for the beauty and graces of her person, as for the charms of her mind, the solidity of her attainments, and the severity of her morals. Catherine was only twelve years old when she assumed the important position of Marquise de Rambouillet. She had brought her husband a princely dowry, and with it, came into his possession the noble residence of the Pisani family, standing on a large piece of valuable land in the very heart of Paris. It adjoined the *Enclos des Quinze-Vingts*, which (until 1780, when it was removed to the Marais) had stood in the *Quartier des Tuileries*.

The mansion occupying the centre of these extensive private grounds had been successively called *Hôtel d'O* and *de Noir-*

moutiers; it was at that time *Hôtel de Pisani,* but has since been known to literary fame as the *Hôtel de Rambouillet,* the marquis having, on becoming its owner, given to it the name of his own family. Its nomenclature was once more changed when it had descended to his grandson in the female line (for the duke had no posterity through either son or grandson), when it was called *Hôtel d'Uzés,* that being the title of its ultimate owner. At his death it was demolished, and the Rue St. Thomas du Louvre (in *its* turn now swept away) was built upon the site.

Of Catherine de Vivonne, Marquise de Rambouillet, and one of the most distinguished persons who come into the lineage of that ancient family, we must give some account here. Although extremely young, she united to the nicest discrimination a singular power of organisation, and considerable originality of mind. She was what the French expressively term *une maîtresse femme,* and it was not long before she perceived the follies into which society had gradually been falling, and, regardless of the reproach of singularity, at once assumed her own line, not because it *was* her own, but because it squared with the standard of propriety her own good sense had placed before her.

At the age of twenty she had become so disgusted with the frivolous tone and corrupt manners of the court, that she had resolved to withdraw from it. At the same time, as she loved society and was eminently fitted to shine by the brilliancy of her conversation and the delicacy of her appreciation, she imagined a project which was crowned with remarkable success. She determined to form a *salon* of her own, to which genius and literary fame should alone be the passport; thus excluding all, of whatever rank or sex, except the choicest spirits of the day. To impart the necessary importance to her undertaking,

the youthful *présidente* of this exclusive association began by reconstructing, according to her own taste, the Hôtel Pisani, thenceforward to be recognised only by its new name. Of its aspect we may form a tolerably accurate idea from Sauval's mention of it ("Antiq. de Paris"). He tells us it was "a massive red-brick house, relieved with stone cornices, quoins, and architectural adornments." It stood, as did most of the "hôtels" in Paris, "entre cour et jardin," and attached to it was a "basse-cour" containing, as he suggestively adds, "toutes les *superfluités, nécessaires* à une grande maison."

To the noble dimensions of the building, and the charm of the grounds, Madame de Rambouillet added the richest and most tasteful interior decorations and furniture.

Mademoiselle de Scudery's flowery description of this privileged temple of the Muses is so characteristic that it is worth transcribing, if only to prove to what extent the best intentions may be perverted, and how the elegant *habitués* of Madame de Rambouillet's *salon* soon degenerated into exaggeration and absurdity;—witness this same *demoiselle* de Scudery's works of fiction, absolutely unreadable from their studied prolixity and overwhelming figures of speech. "L'ordre, la régularité et la propriété" (rather a bathos, this), says she, "règnaient dans tous les appartements, et se traçoient dans tous les meubles. Tout est magnifique chez elle, et même en particulier" (another bathos) "les *lampes* (!) sont différentes des autres lieux: ses cabinets sont pleins de mille raretés, qui font voir l'admirable jugement de celle qui les a choisies. L'air est toujours parfumé dans son palais. Diverses corbeilles magnifiques pleines de fleurs, font un printems continuel dans sa chambre, et le lieu où on la voit est si agréable, qu'on croit être dans un enchantement, quand on est près d'elle," &c., &c.

The Hôtel de Rambouillet had been renovated, as we have

said, by Catherine, and the novelty of the style she adopted may be termed the "renaissance" of decoration in Paris *salons*. The design of the alterations in the disposition of lobbies, vestibules, staircases, antechambers, and *salons*, was entirely her own, and the effect was so universally admired that Marie de Medicis, who, nevertheless, came from the land of palaces and architects, sent her builder to study the Hôtel de Rambouillet when she was about to construct the Luxembourg.

A writer of the time gives us to understand that Madame de Rambouillet was the first who ventured out of the beaten track of interior arrangements, and ventured to propose an entirely new disposition of rooms, because she had the courage to assert that she considered it both more convenient and more elegant. She was also the first to depart from the established rule, which prescribed—no one knows why—crimson and brown as the colours *de rigueur* for all drawing-rooms,* and the result was that famous "SALON BLEU," which became the privileged resort of wits and *savans*, and where Madame de Rambouillet, the queen and patroness of letters, held her dazzling and envied court.

The furniture of the "*salon bleu*" was of sky-blue velvet, relieved with gilt *charpenterie*, according to Sauval; and on luxurious satin cushions of the same colour, *la belle Arthénice* received the votaries of the Muses. This was the name under which the *présidente* of these *coteries* was to be designated—that of Catherine not being deemed sufficiently classical, it had to be anagrammatized into Arthénice by the poet Malherbe, and was unanimously adopted.

Madame "Arthénice," it appears, had a delicate skin, and as she objected to the effect of the fire upon it, the *séances* of this literary body were held, all the year round, in a temperature

* This is still a social law in Italy.

which was never raised by artificial heat. The members sat in circles before the alcove, and within the *ruelle* (whence the expression "*coureur de ruelles*"), and the attention of the meeting was generally directed to the discussion of some phrase, idiom, expression, or grammatical nicety, which, after being duly canvassed on all sides, was admitted or rejected by a majority. Vaugelas, the grammarian, was appointed to an honorary post in this amateur *académie*, and was regarded as an indisputable authority.

In 1615 this novel association was fairly started. "At that moment, the Hôtel de Rambouillet," says Châteaubriand, "was the *rendez-vous* of all that was most *recherché* and most elegant in the kingdom of letters; there, under the auspices of a woman, herself a model of grace and refinement, dawned that epoch she had herself called into being, and which may be termed the modification and remodelling of the French language and of French society. Hither, persons of all ranks were admitted, provided the *éclat* of their genius was such as to entitle them to the *entrée;* and here were imparted that elevated tone and dignified bearing which distinguish our *ancienne noblesse*. Cultivation of mind was united with polish of manners, and was as perceptible in their gestures as in their speech."

Madame de Rambouillet, and in time, with her, her daughter, the beautiful and admired Julie d'Angennes, presided over *réunions* which included such names as those of the Grand Monarque himself; the Cardinaux de Richelieu and de la Valette; the Grand Condé, with his mother la Princesse de Condé, and his sister la Duchesse de Longueville; Madame de Lafayette, the reformer of light literature in France; Madame de Suze and the redoubtable Mademoiselle de Scudery, with her brother, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld; Madame de Sévigné, Benserade, l'Abbé Cottin, S. Evremond, Corneille, Chapelain, Cottelet,

Gombault, Malherbe, Fléchier, Bossuet, Bois-robert, Conrart, La Fontaine, Racan, Pelisson, Voiture, Tallement des Reaux, Ménage, Vaugelas, the learned Huet, afterwards Bishop of Avranches; and besides these, generals, ministers, magistrates —in short, all who were in any way distinguished, either by their position or their learning.

We have seen the *beau côté de la médaille*, we must now look at the *revers*. There is no doubt that some such movement was loudly called for; the growing degeneracy of morality, and, as a consequence, the laxity of manners and licentiousness of expression had become such as to shock the mind of a refined and delicate woman, and as her position enabled her to set on foot a plan for reforming these growing abuses, it was natural she should adopt it without loss of time, and pursue it with zeal; but it was not given to Madame de Rambouillet to foresee the extreme to which her idea would be carried, and the abuses that would follow. "Là on a vu," says La Bruyère, "un cercle de personnes des deux sexes, liées par la conversation et par un commerce d'esprit; ils laissaient au vulgaire l'art de parler d'une manière intelligible; une chose dite entre eux peu clairement en entraînait une autre encore plus obscure, sur laquelle on enchérissait par de vraies énigmes toujours suivies par de longs applaudissemens."

The facetious Scarron, the severe Boileau, and the discriminating Molière, have, each in his own style, passed their stringent and immortal criticisms on the exaggerations into which the *beaux esprits* and *précieuses* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet—for thus they styled themselves—were at length carried. After having so long laid down the law in every literary dispute, and seen its decisions respected by grammarians and poets, the power of the Hôtel de Rambouillet gradually declined; its prestige could not long survive the sarcasms which had pro-

ceeded from such pens as those we have designated, and which had hit its foibles with so much precision. Under Louis XIV. it had become a thing of the past, and the eighteenth century contemptuously styled it "*Les Galères de l'Esprit.*"

Molière's criticism had done its work; his genius had crushed in the bud the growing euphuism which had sprung up in the gardens of Rambouillet: the comedy of the "Précieuses Ridicules" was performed for the first time at Paris on the stage of the Petit Bourbon, on the 18th November, 1659, where it proved an extraordinary success; it continued triumphant without interruption for four months, and Molière took the part of Mascarille. Ménage, who was present the first night, deserves to be quoted on the subject:—"I was among the audience," says he, "at the first representation of 'Les Précieuses Ridicules.' Mademoiselle de Rambouillet was present, her sister Madame de Grignan (the second and penultimate wife of the Marquis de Grignan), all the Hôtel Rambouillet, M. Chapelain, and several others of my acquaintance. The piece was received with general applause, and I was myself delighted with it, because I saw at once the effect that it must produce. As we left the theatre, I took Chapelain by the hand and said to him: 'Monsieur, you and I have been wont to approve all the absurdities we have just heard so fairly criticised; but, to express myself as St. Remi to Clovis, 'we shall now have to burn what we adored, and to adore what we have burnt.' And in truth it turned out," he continues, "as I predicted. From the date of that first representation, false '*bel esprit*' and high-flown style were doomed."

We hardly know whether this candid acknowledgment of a vice so long cherished that it had become to those who practised it almost a second nature, is more honourable to the critic who dealt the blow or to the criticised who received it so gracefully.

Those who were hit by the justice of Molière's satire, however, were not the only portions of the audience who recognised the accuracy of his remarks. An old man called out from the pit, "Courage, courage, Molière, voilà la bonne comédie!"

To conclude the subject of the "Réunions Littéraires;" the heritage of the Hôtel de Rambouillet was gathered up by the Duchesses de Montausier and d'Orléans, and Madame de Maintenon, who cherished and preserved the traditions of brilliant and polite conversation it had inspired—traditions subsequently to be transferred to the court of the Duchesse de Maine and the *salons* of Mesdames de Geoffrin et de Tencin.

We may be permitted to return for a moment to the Château de Rambouillet, in order to see how it fared under its brilliant mistress Catherine de Vivonne, whose summers were passed within its magnificent domain. As her Paris hotel assembled all *beaux esprits* of the day during the winter and spring, so did the old walls of the château and its shady avenues decoy them from the dust and bustle of the capital during the summer and autumn months; and many gay and joyous *fêtes* were given there to the *élite* of French society. The marquise, whose irreproachable character in the midst of corrupt times had gained for her somewhat of the reputation of a prude, was nevertheless full of spirits, and thoroughly capable of appreciating a joke. An amusing incident which occurred at Rambouillet betrays the humorous side of her character. The Bishop of Lisieux was visiting her there, when one morning she proposed to him a stroll in the park. They walked on for some time till they reached a group of rocks overshadowed by some fine and thickly-tufted trees. Here they halted; and the bishop could discern between the openings in the foliage the shimmer of something white, which flitted now here and now there along the banks of a crystal

lake below. He thought himself in fairy-land, for on a steadier inspection, he distinctly perceived a party of white-robed naiads disporting themselves in the water. The marquise stood by enjoying his reverence's surprise, and highly amused at his reluctance to relinquish so picturesque a scene, when she beckoned him to return to the house. The adventure was long remembered; and the good Bishop of Lisieux never saw his malicious hostess afterwards without asking whether Mademoiselle de Rambouillet and her nymphs still frequented the *rochers de Rambouillet?*

Madame de Rambouillet was a sincere friend, and there was a genuineness in all her professions of regard that was quite refreshing amidst the false manners of her times. She was generous in her hospitality; but we find an instance on record in which her love of mischief induced her to take part in a practical joke upon a guest, and to carry it to the very verge of danger.

The Comte de Guiche, who, besides being a distinguished man, was one of the exquisites of the day, was staying at the château; and being particularly fond of mushrooms, with which the forest abounded, had partaken largely of a dish of them at supper. Chaudebonne, a wag, and one of the *habitués* of the house, had been chaffing him on his *gourmandise,* and imagined a trick which should make him remember it. No sooner had the Comte retired to rest than he slipped into his dressing-room and brought away all his *pourpoints,* including the one he had just taken off. These he carried into the drawing-room, where the ladies set to work with scissors and needles; and very soon these garments were all taken in, to the extent of about three inches.

The next morning, the Comte, who had retired to rest earlier than the remainder of the company, rose betimes, and having called his valet, desired him to dress him, that he might take a

turn in the gardens; but after getting the sleeves on with some difficulty, he found it impossible to button his coat. He asked for another, and discovered the same difficulty; then another, always with the same result;—there was in each a deficiency of three inches in the width! He was pulling away at the fourth, and very red in the face, when Chaudebonne sauntered into his room, alleging that he had come to fetch the Comte on the part of the ladies, who were waiting breakfast for him. The Comte, in great alarm, communicated to Chaudebonne the singular circumstance which was puzzling him so much. Chaudebonne expressed his concern, but advised him, at the risk of appearing less elegant, to put on the coat he had taken off the previous night. The Comte de Guiche heaved a deep sigh, but resigned himself to this counsel, and ordered his valet to bring him the garment in question; but what was his dismay to find this even tighter than the others!

"Pardieu!" cried his tormentor, as if struck by a sudden thought, "those unfortunate mushrooms, of which you ate so voraciously last night—no, surely, they could not have been poisonous!"

"Hé! What!" exclaimed Guiche, in consternation. "Nay, now you mention it, I do believe you are right. And now I think of it, I did not feel well all night, nor yet this morning."

"Peste!" replied Chaudebonne, "do you know this is no joke; the Forest of Rambouillet abounds in these poisonous funguses; no doubt you are a victim to the ignorance of the cook! We must alarm the house, and see what can be done." Saying this he opened the door, called out in a stentorian voice that the Comte de Guiche was at the point of death, and soon the chamber was filled with the family, the servants, and the guests in the house.

Guiche, who by this time was fully persuaded of the worst,

begged to be put to bed, that he might die in peace; and when the concourse entered the room, they found him unable to sustain himself, being lifted towards his bed between his valet and Chaudebonne, calling out loudly for a confessor. His valet left the room to fetch one. Chaudebonne was about to follow him, when Guiche entreated him not to leave him. The servant, however, soon returned.

"Well!" cried the *malade imaginaire*, impatiently, "the priest? Where is he?"

"Before I fetch him," replied he, "Madame la Marquise wishes Monsieur le Comte to read this little note."

"Read it, read it, my dear fellow," said he to Chaudebonne; "my sight is gone!"

Chaudebonne opened the note, and read—

"Prescription for M. le Comte de Guiche:—
"Take a pair of scissors and let out your seams!"

The Comte then saw how he had been served, and thankful to be let off so cheaply, was only too glad to escape the doctor and the confessor.

The strangest part of the story, however, is to be found in the singular coincidence that a few days after this affair, as if to avenge the poor Comte de Guiche, the marquise, her daughter, and Chaudebonne really did sup off some poisonous funguses, and were brought very near death's door. It is added that they owed their recovery to some *thériaque*, which was accidentally found in an old cupboard.

Seven children were the offspring of the Marquis de Rambouillet by Catherine de Vivonne. Of these, two only were sons, and both died before their parents; so that the Rambouillet family *tomba en quenouille*, and became extinct as regards male issue in this generation. Three of the daughters were nuns, while of the two remaining, one married the Marquis de Grignan—afterwards the husband of Mademoiselle de Sévigné

—and the other, Julie d'Angennes, *dame d'honneur* of Marie Thérèse, was, after being refused to his brother, sought in marriage by the Duc de Montausier, *gouverneur* of the "Grand Dauphin," son of Louis XIV., and grandfather to Louis XV., to whom Bossuet was *précepteur*.

The duke was a just and honourable man, but very severe, and he ruled his royal alumnus with a rod of iron. It was a responsible position, but it is doubtful whether this was the wisest system; however, the duke was a man of high principle, and considered he was acting for the best. "C'était," says a contemporary writer, "Platon à la cour." His conduct towards the prince was that of a philosopher who despised the arts of flattery, and whose guiding principle was to be found in truth and reason. Having on one occasion had a dispute with the prince, during one of their conferences, the latter became much excited, and in the heat of his passion called for pistols. "Apportez à monseigneur ses pistolets," repeated the duke with the utmost coolness, and on their being placed in the prince's hands, he observed, "Now prince, what is your royal highness's pleasure?" The dauphin was filled with confusion, he fell at the duke's feet, but the latter took advantage of the opportunity to give him the lesson he needed—"Voilà, monseigneur," said he, "où conduisent les passions!"

With the Grand Monarque himself he was equally uncompromising: Louis XIV. having one day told him that he had at length abandoned to the penalties of the law an assassin, who had in the course of his life committed twenty murders, "Non, sire," replied Montausier, "lui n'a tué qu'une seule victime, c'est votre majesté qui a assassiné les dix-neuf autres."

"Mes pères," he was wont to say, "ont été les fidèles serviteurs des rois, et jamais leur flatteurs. Cette honnête liberté, dont je fais profession, est un droit acquis, et la vertu est venue de pére en fils comme une portion de mon héritage."

He one day took the dauphin into a wretched cottage, and after calling his attention to the condition of its inmates, the hardships of their lot, and the efforts of their honest labour, he said—"Vous voyez là, monseigneur, ce que doivent faire ces pauvres gens pour payer l'or qui orne vos palais; vous voyez là le père, la mère, des petits enfans qui meurent de faim pour subvenir aux dépenses de votre table."

When his functions towards his royal ward came to an end, he said, in taking leave of him:—

"Monseigneur, si vous êtes honnête homme, vous m'aimerez; si vous ne l'êtes pas, vous me haïrez, et je m'en consolerai."

Molière's enemies tried to persuade the Duc de Montausier that it was he who was designated under the character of "Alceste;" the duke went to see the piece, and when he came away, remarked that he would gladly resemble Molière's "Misanthrope."

The duke courted Julie fourteen years, and the long-deferred marriage was performed by M. Godeau, Evêque de Grasse, an old friend of the family. He was short and deformed, and went by the name of "Le Nain de la Princesse Julie." The Duc de Montausier thus became, in right of his wife, proprietor of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and son-in-law of Catherine de Vivonne. This venerable and illustrious lady died in 1665, aged eighty-two. She survived not only her sons, as we have said, but most of her friends, and some of her faculties, and no doubt felt what she wrote, when she composed the simple but melancholy epitaph which concludes thus:—

"Et si tu veux, passant, mesurer tous mes malheurs,
Tu n'auras qu'a compter les moments de ma vie."

Julie d'Angennes, wife of the virtuous and excellent Duc de Montausier, inherited, with the grace and beauty, the rare mental attributes of her mother. Upright, amiable, accomplished, and brilliant in conversation, her society was sought by all the wits

of the day, and the *salons* of the Duchesse de Montausier were as much frequented by people of talent as the Hôtel de Rambouillet itself had been during the life of Catherine de Vivonne. A graceful and curious collection of poems was addressed to her, known as "Le Bouquet de Julie." It was contributed to by all the *beaux esprits* of the time, and the duke, her husband, who suggested it, was among the number.

Notwithstanding the *Bouquet** and other gallantries, of which Julie was the object, the Duc de Montausier, as we have seen, waited patiently for the lady of his affection, who had arrived at the mature age of thirty-eight before they were married. The delay had been partly owing to the devoted affection with which she watched her sick brother, and partly to the timidity of the duke, whose brother had sought her in marriage, but had been rejected by her mother in consequence of a warning she declared she had received on the subject in a dream!

The union of the Duc and Duchesse de Montausier was blessed with one daughter, a most singular and precocious child, who was said to have been a *précieuse* as soon as she was weaned, and became the sole but worthy representative of the Rambouillet family. On her marriage with the Duc d'Uzés, the castle and the forest, and with it the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and all the other extensive property, came into that family. With them, however, they did not long remain: the days of its old hereditary tenure, unbroken from the earliest feudal times until 1665, had come to an end, and from that period it continued to change hands—a melancholy humiliation in the hoary days of its age.

* This unique production created a great sensation among the *précieuses*, by whom it was regarded as a masterpiece of wit and taste. It was gorgeously bound, and each poem was copied by Jarry, one of the first caligraphers of the time, and faced by an emblematic flower exquisitely painted on vellum. The "Bouquet de Julie" was put up to auction at La Vallière's sale in 1784, and was knocked down to an Englishman named Payne for 14,510 francs.

In 1699, the old château was bought by Florian d'Armenonville, *Directeur-général des Finances;* he was wealthy, and he repaired and embellished it. In 1706 it was again sold, and bought by the Comte de Toulouse, from whom it descended to his son, the Duc de Penthièvre, who in 1783 sold it to Louis XIV. for 16,000,000 francs. Louis established there the royal dairy, and called it "la Laiterie de la Reine;" but when Marie Antoinette held her bucolic *fêtes*, and dressed her fair form in the costume of a milkmaid, preserving the style, but substituting materials of a costly description, she preferred her own Petit Trianon, as far more *coquet* than the solemn old edifice, which offered few attractions to so lively a princess; the court, however, frequently took its pastime here, to breathe the fresh country air, and yet not travel too far from the capital.

Soon after this, however, came the great political change which swept away all existing institutions, and courts, and kings, and palaces were proscribed things, and even proscribed words, only to be uttered in whispers, and only to be thought of with dread. Time passed, and a new dynasty had arisen which brought back old things under new names; there were no more "kings," but there were "emperors" instead; so that the next crowned head who brought his suite to Rambouillet was Napoleon I.

Napoleon, we know not why, favoured Rambouillet more highly than any other residence belonging to the crown, and he made prolonged stays there.

In 1811 he organised a plan for the breeding and rearing of merino sheep in France, and fixed on the extensive lands surrounding Rambouillet as one of the principal *bergeries* into which they were to be received. Spain at that time had 25,000,000 merino sheep, so Napoleon declared that France should maintain 100,000,000.

Once he gave a *fête* at Rambouillet, with which is connected the following suggestive little incident. Napoléon, desirous that his *fête* should be attractive, expressed a wish that the entertainment should be enriched by the talents of the *artistes* of the Imperial Academy of Paris, who attended, exerted themselves to the utmost, and gave general satisfaction. Napoleon, pleased with their services, ordered the Ministre de l'Intérieur to reward them with a *gratification* which should testify the approval he had felt. The minister, anxious no doubt to keep down the items of his budget, ingeniously imagined the expedient of paying them with a quantity of handsome presentation volumes, which had been sent from time to time to the emperor by their authors, and which therefore necessitated no outlay. Presents of this description were not exactly what the *artistes* had expected, and they were accordingly accepted with not very good grace.

Some little time after, Napoleon, wishing to give a second *fête* at Fontainebleau, similar to that of which Rambouillet had been the scene, asked his minister what he had expended on this portion of the festivities on the last occasion.

"Sire," replied the functionary, "je leur ai fait remettre des livres."

"Comment, des livres?" exclaimed the emperor, astonished: "des *livres tournois*, sans doute?"

"Non, sire, des ouvrages en littérature que nous avions, mais dorés sur tranche et superbement reliés."

"Monsieur le ministre," said the emperor, gravely, "cette fois j'entends que ces dames de l'Opéra soient payées en *francs*, et non pas en *livres*."

Napoleon revisited Rambouillet once more, but no longer with song and dance, not even with a court or a suite—no longer the idol of a nation and the ruler of a great empire, but

vanquished, crest-fallen, an exile, he made his first stolen halt there when retreating from the fatal field of Waterloo. Here it was he paused to face his desperate position, to determine his future movements; and to realise the evanescence of human greatness.

Louis XVIII. rarely, if ever, visited Rambouillet; but Charles X. sometimes hunted in the forest. It had become the lot of Rambouillet to witness royal reverses, and to receive the sad confidences of exiled monarchs. To this same refuge came Charles when he, in his turn, fled from those who now overturned his dynasty; and the 31st July, 1830, witnessed his retreat beneath the same roof which had so lately sheltered the fallen emperor. He, however, was not yet all alone: the dauphin accompanied him, with the Duchesse de Berri and the young Duc de Bordeaux, and he was followed by a few devoted friends and faithful soldiers. The dauphine, who had not been able to accompany them, arrived the next day in a peasant's disguise.

On the 2nd August following the eventful 27th, 28th, and 29th July, Charles had succeeded in assembling at Rambouillet an armed force of 12,000 men, and entertained hopes of re-establishing himself on the throne of France. However, the news of his proceedings soon spread to Paris, whence a counter-force of 15,000 men, under General Pojol, was despatched to meet them. Charles no sooner learnt this than, giving up his cause as hopeless, he retired to Cherbourg, having previously signed his abdication in favour of the dauphin; who, soon after, similarly abandoned his pretensions—such as they were—to the Duc de Bordeaux. In what way the latter benefited by these generous cessions, subsequent history has taught their posterity.

From Rambouillet the king, who no longer had a kingdom,

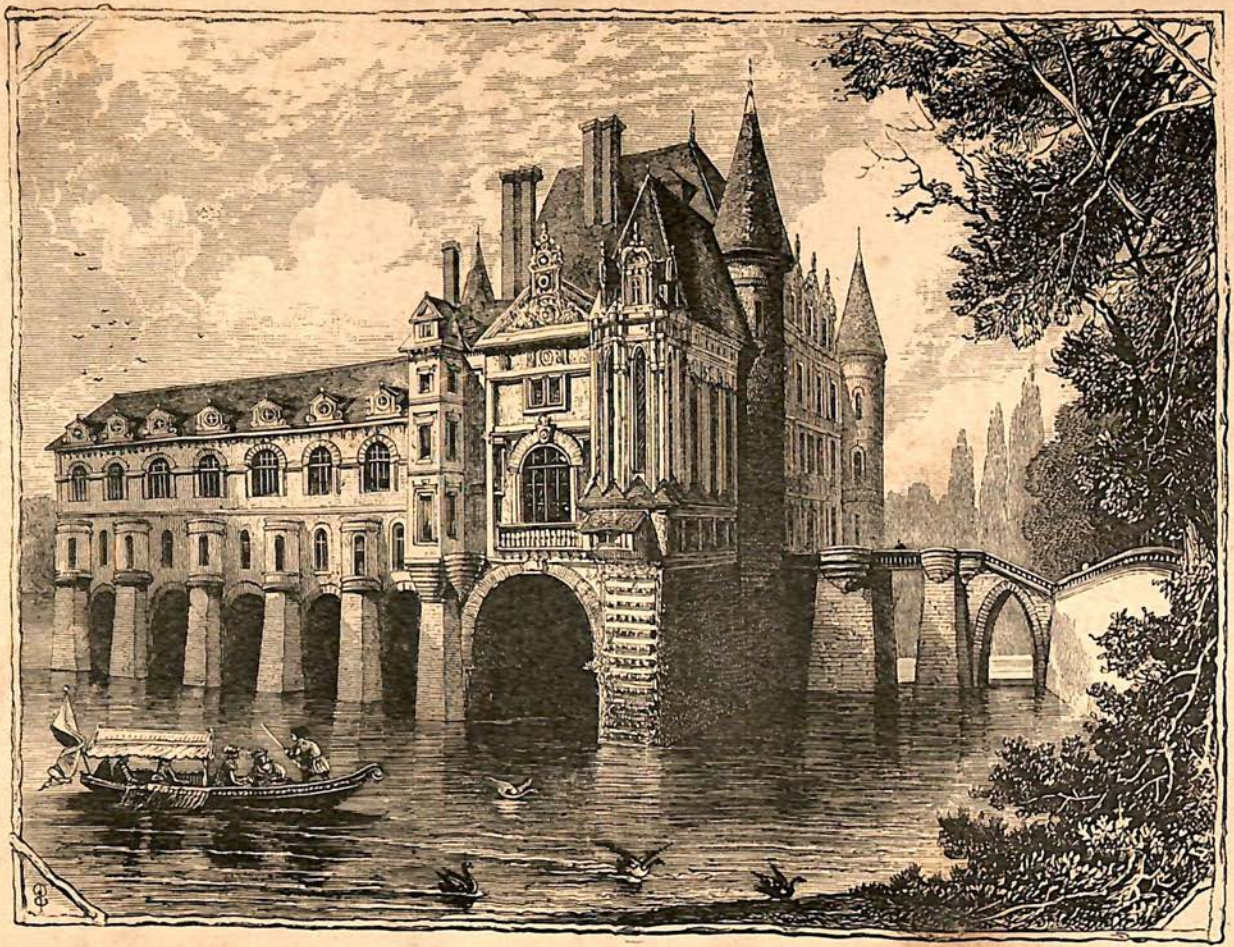
retired into a life of ignoble privacy, and died in forgotten obscurity.

In 1852, the Château de Rambouillet altogether changed its destination: no longer a feudal castle—no longer a royal residence—no longer the centre of a circle of *beaux esprits*—it became, under Napoleon III., an asylum and house of education for the daughters of brave military officers.

Rambouillet is celebrated as the birth-place of Mademoiselle de la Siblière, immortalised by La Fontaine; also of the benevolent and illustrious Duc de Penthièvre.

CHENONCEAUX.

Singular Elevation—Unique Site—Beauty and Costliness of the Palace—Remote Antecedents—Thomas Bohier and his Wife, Catherine Briçonnet; their Additions, Improvements, and unexecuted Projects—Posthumous Trial for Malversation—Chenonceaux confiscated to the Crown; the Residence of François I.—Catherine de Medicis—Chenonceaux under Henri II.—Diane de Poitiers; the Costliness of her Outlay—Clement Marot; his Disgrace—Death of Henri II.; its Consequences to Diane—Compulsory Cession of Chenonceaux to Catherine de Medicis; her Alterations—Chenonceaux under François II.—Marie Stuart; her Apartments—Henri III.—"Bonnes Nouvelles"—Chenonceaux bequeathed to Louise de Vaudemont; her Widowhood—The "White Queen"—César, Duc de Vendôme—Chenonceaux sold to the Dupin Family—Madame Dupin; her "Salon Bleu;" how attended—J.-J. Rousseau young Dupin's Tutor; his Description of the Spot; his Life while there; his Dramatic Writings—Interior of the Palace; Private Apartments; Pictures and other Works of Art—Chenonceaux respected at the Revolution—Death of Madame Dupin—The Chapel.



CHENONCEAUX.

CHATEAU DE CHENONCEAUX.

. . . . "Through portals sculptured deep,
With imagery beautiful as dream,
We went." . . . . SHELLEY.

"Basti si magnifiquement,
Il est debout comme un géant
Dedans le lit de la rivière,
C'est-à-dire dessus un pont
Que porte cent toises de long."
CLEMENT MAROT.

SUCH is the quaint, but not inaccurate, description of this singular edifice—unique alike in its history, its construction, its situation, and its attractiveness—from the pen of the court poet and favoured contemporary of its palmiest days.

Not one of the *Renaissance châteaux*, indeed, but offers its own peculiar features, and is recognised by its individual characteristics; yet, of all that we have visited, Chenonceaux is undoubtedly the most striking, and perhaps the most attractive. We do not remember to have met with another *château*, either in France or in any other part of Europe, actually spanning a river, and built upon the arches of a bridge. Thus, nevertheless, stands Chenonceaux; and, although once a fortress, lurking in a valley instead of being reared upon the summit of a mountain. Its fairy form floating like a halcyon nest upon the reeds and the water-lilies, and nestling beneath the shade of the protecting alders, conceals amid the aquatic plants its donjons and its buttressed walls, and reposes in picturesque

security, while masking, under the aspect of a summer's-day palace, its posterns and its drawbridges.

The very beauty of the place is also its protection; the blue river flowing beneath it, is its moat and its defence, while the verdant banks, which can be laid under water at the first approach of danger, stand it in stead of a wall. The gold of Henri II.'s treasury and the taste of Diane de Poitiers were two of the elements which contributed to make Chenonceaux what we see it; for no château of its venerable age has survived to our times in like condition, or offers us the same opportunity of talking face to face with mediæval times.

Of its remoter history, few details have reached our days, and all we can discern from the pages of the early chroniclers is, that in the year 1272 it was a modest mansion, the property of the Marques family—an Auvergnat race of ancient name, well known and highly considered as well on account of their wealth and influence, as of their illustrious origin; for they claimed relationship with princes of the blood. Their power was wide-spread, for their retainers were numerous, while they were in a position to support a considerable force of men-at-arms, and had moreover culled laurels on the field of glory.

These lofty family traditions, however, did not suffice to maintain unbroken the chain of loyalty which had linked so many generations to one another and to the crown; for during the reign of the afflicted King Charles VI., Jean de Marques, faithless to his sovereign's cause, threw himself into the ranks of the Duke of Burgundy, and not only took arms against the dauphin, afterwards Charles VII., but treacherously sold him to his enemies. This traitor, corrupted by the English, concealed their soldiers in the donjon of his castle; but his crime met with its reward, and, as the French expressively say, "*Il fut puni par où il avait péché.*" The English, notwithstanding the assistance they had surreptitiously received, were beaten by

the Maréchal de Laval Bois-Dauphin, in the meadows of Saint-Georges, between Montrichard and Bléré, and the felony of Marques having been discovered, the fortifications of Chenonceaux were demolished, the woods were cut down "*à hauteur d'infamie,*" and the châtelain, declared a traitor and a rebel, was consigned to the dungeons of Loches, where, in disgrace and captivity, he ended his dishonoured days.

Chenonceaux, however, was not confiscated; it was given to Jean II. de Marques, son of the preceding, on his rendering fealty and homage to the king, on the 12th May, 1431. This seigneur compensated for his father's crime by fighting valiantly against the English, and was rewarded by the permission to build up once more the walls of his château. Pierre de la Marques succeeded him, and, being of a turbulent disposition, bid fair to walk in the steps of his grandsire. Louis XI., however, was now on the throne, and he was not a man to be trifled with, nor a king it was safe to offend. Pierre curbed his temper, and adhered so strictly to the line of duty, that he gave the monarch no chance of a quarrel with him. Unfortunately for him, he was extravagant in his tastes and inaccurate in matters of business; the consequence was, that he became heavily indebted, and was forced to sell his fine domain to meet the demands of his creditors. It was a sad day when the ancient family de Marques, who had during so many generations been lords of the soil, could no longer call this princely habitation theirs. It is said that Peter went out and wept bitterly at the melancholy and dishonouring thought that the house of his fathers, the cradle of his children, the tomb of his ancestors, was to pass for ever into other hands.

Thomas Bohier, Baron de Saint-Cyergue, was the purchaser of the "chastel and seigneurie" of Chenonceaux. He also was of an Auvergnat family, and was married to Catherine Briçonnet —an alliance which greatly added to his power and influence.

Catherine's father, Guillaume Briçonnet, was one of those clever, not to say lucky fellows, who possess the grand secret of *success*, and he had contrived to attain the highest honours of the state—for he was cardinal, prime minister, and superintendent of finances under Charles VIII. Before entering holy orders he had married Raoulette de Beaune, sister of Jacques de Beaune-Semblançoy, superintendent of finances under François I. In those superstitious days, when the office of royal astrologer obliged the person holding it to prophesy such events as he thought likely to come to pass, the astrologer-royal of Louis XI. predicted to Guillaume Briçonnet, *in the presence of his wife*, that he would very soon find himself a cardinal. Nothing could have been more ingeniously contrived to pave the way for the verification of the announcement—from the hour that the poor lady's death had been so summarily foretold she drooped and faded. No change had any effect upon her; no reasoning could raise her spirits; she took to her bed, and, without suffering from any particular disease to which the physicians could give a name, she died within two short months! Guillaume Briçonnet, now firmly convinced that he was destined for the cardinalate, and acting on the principle, "Aide-toi, Dieu t'aidera," left no effort untried by which he could raise himself to the envied dignity; so that when, at the end of a year, he found himself at the summit of his wishes, the prophet was regarded with wonder and awe, as something either more or less than man. We may style this the "philosophy of prophecy."

Thomas Bohier seems to have obtained with his wife the luck of his father-in-law, for he was overwhelmed with honours and stipends. From being chamberlain to Louis XI., Charles VIII., Louis XII., and François I., he became general of finances and lieutenant-general for the king in Milan. Bohier,

having possessed himself of Chenonceaux, determined to expend some of his superfluous wealth on its enlargement and embellishment, and to adopt the style of architecture then in vogue. In 1515 he began operations—with the help of what architect is unknown—reserving very little of the ancient edifice. Neither taste nor expense was spared to render the new château one of the most exquisite and imposing edifices of the day. The time occupied in this elaboration of ornament began at last to weary the patience of the wealthy proprietor, and he was wont to lament he had ever undertaken it, and to express his fears that he should never see the end of his labours, and he caused to be inscribed in various parts of the building the following expressive line:—

"S'il vient à point, m'en soviendra."

Nevertheless, the result of all this patience, labour, and cost became the theme and the admiration of all the country round, when, in the midst of his interesting supervision, Thomas Bohier received the king's command to betake himself to Milan, and his building operations were of necessity left to the care of Catherine Briçonnet, his wife. In the midst of his distant preoccupations, however, he did not forget his smiling home in the valley of the Cher, and obtained from François I., in 1517, letters patent, for which he had applied, authorising him to build a bridge across the Cher; but this project he did not live to accomplish; for, alas! Thomas Bohier had seen the last of his native land, and of his beautiful palace on the bridge: he died at Milan on the 14th March, 1524, and his body was embalmed and sent home to be interred at S. Saturnin, in a chapel enriched with gold and azure, to be shared with him, a few brief years later, by his faithful Catherine.

After the death of Thomas Bohier, whispers went abroad that one of the hastening causes of his death had been, as

Theodore Hook would have said, "something wrong in the *chest.*" When the treasury was opened, and the accounts were audited, a woeful deficiency of public money was detected, whereas the wealth accumulated by Thomas Bohier had attained suspiciously fabulous proportions. A bed of justice declared the deceased guilty of malversation of funds, and condemned Antoine Bohier, his son, to restore to the state a considerable portion of the missing sum. This sentence threatened ruin to the family; but matters having stood over until 1533, François I. agreed to accept, in lieu of the prescribed amount, the château and domain of Chenonceaux, which thus became royal property. It was taken possession of, on the king's behalf, by the Connétable Anne de Montmorency and Philibert Babou de la Bourdaisière.

François I. made frequent visits to Chenonceaux, and took with him his daughter-in-law, Catherine de Medicis, who, from the moment she saw it, cast her longing eyes upon this enchanting residence.

When Catherine de Medicis set her heart upon any object, there was very little doubt as to her ultimately gaining it, and we shall see how she fulfilled the promise she made to herself that, at whatever cost, Chenonceaux should one day be hers.

On the death of François, Diane de Poitiers, who not only admired the Château de Chenonceaux for its own sake, but eagerly coveted it that she might triumph over her detested rival, the queen, hastened to take advantage of an unguarded moment to ask the king for it as a gift. Henri II., who could refuse her nothing, granted it without hesitation, and added the title of Duchess of Valentinois, so that, in 1535, Diane became the proud and envied *châtelaïne* of the beautiful castle and domain of Chenonceaux.

This successful piece of diplomacy on the part of Diane put

the finishing touch to the queen's hatred, and the sense of her wrongs aroused within her all her Florentine jealousy and vengeance. Catherine now only awaited an opportunity for humiliating the favourite, who, having gained her point, paraded her triumph with the most undisguised exultation. No sooner was she in possession of the place coveted equally by wife and mistress, but won by the latter, than she began to lavish upon it the most fabulous sums, being determined to render it as sumptuous as the most gorgeous of the royal palaces. She reconstructed, according to her own taste, the southern façade of the château, and built the nine arches projected by Thomas Bohier, forty years before. This was an inconceivable improvement to the building, for she covered it with a gallery, not only in itself a tasteful addition, but also affording an invisible communication with the left bank of the Cher, where the pleasure-grounds were laid out with the greatest taste and luxury, in lawns and flower-borders, bowers and groves, and ornamented with grottoes and fountains. Within the massive piles sustaining the arches on which the gallery was built, and which were hollow, were constructed the kitchens, domestic offices, cellars, &c.

Artists and architects were freely invited to Chenonceaux, and generously patronised by Diane; who, besides, was wont to accord her almost regal protection to poets and men of letters generally. Some strange rumours have been handed down to us by the Abbé Treil, touching the relations which subsisted between Diane and Clement Marot, who was a very frequent guest, whether at Anêt or Chenonceaux; and as the gallant poet was never wanting in admiration for the princesses of the gay Valois Court, we are not prepared altogether to dispute the very possible truth of these reports.

Marot's good understanding with Diane, however, under-

went a long and serious interruption, owing, it is said, to an incident which, it will surprise most readers to learn, could have been attended with such disagreeable, not to say disastrous consequences. It appears that one day, long before Diane had obtained the gift of Chenonceaux, for it was during the absence of François I. in Spain, Marot had invited Diane to a dinner, at which, although a day of abstinence, no fish was served. Diane, who discountenanced the reformed religion, piqued at the indiscretion of her host, took great offence at this demonstration, and found an opportunity of having him denounced to the Inquisition, by which terrible authority he was at once seized, and confined in the Châtelet. The Inquisition, having got possession of his person, availed itself of the circumstance to inquire into the tone and tenor of his writings, and proceeded to charge him with the licentiousness of his language, and the scandalous nature of his stories. On this accusation he was condemned by the "Holy Office" to remain in durance for a period to be determined on. After the most pressing solicitations for release, the luckless poet could only obtain the favour of being transferred from the gloomy and unwholesome cells of the Châtelet to the scarcely less prejudicial prison of Chartres. While there Marot wrote his "Enfers," a stinging satire against the ministrants of justice, and retouched the "Roman de la Rose;" but he only obtained his liberation on the return of François I. from his captivity in Spain.*

* The wages Marot received from his post on the "*Estat du Roi*" were 240 livres annually. His father had held the position of *valet de chambre* before him, and on the exchange of the two names being made in the household roll, Clement wrote the following lines, which do not appear particularly witty, although they have been transmitted to our times:—

"Il ne fallait, Sire, tout simplement
Qu'effacer 'Jean,' et escrire 'Clement;'
Or, en est Jean, par son trépas hors mys,
Et puis Clement, par son malheur obmys."

In the midst of the luxurious festivities and expensive improvements carried on in the fairy kingdom of Chenonceaux, a strong hand suddenly arrested the ambitious career of the king's mistress. At the tournament given in the great square of the Palais des Tournelles to celebrate the double marriage of his sister, the Princess Margaret, with the Duc de Savoie, and that of his eldest daughter, the Princess Elizabeth, with Philip II. of Spain, the king, while jousting with a disguised knight, who proved afterwards to be the Comte de Montgommery, was wounded in the eye, and the injury was very soon pronounced fatal. Henri lingered eleven days, but Diane was carefully excluded from the sick chamber, and was never allowed to see her royal lover again. He died, and that unexpected death at once annihilated Diane's future, while all her hopes may be said to have been buried in his grave. The corpse of him who had been Henri II. was scarcely cold when Catherine, who felt that her day of triumph was now come, unable to restrain her emotions of rage and revenge, sent a peremptory message to demand possession of the château she had so long desired to own, and with it the restitution of the crown jewels, of which Diane had obtained the keeping, if not the absolute ownership.

Diane's haughty spirit was curbed under her altered destinies—she felt that her reign had come to an abrupt but irrevocable end, and she saw the folly of contending with the imperious queen whose will was thenceforward to be her law; she suspected, too, how cruelly Catherine would make her feel her fall; she accordingly yielded up her trophies without resistance, and was, perhaps, yet the more galled by the show of equity with which Catherine made over to her the Château de Chaumont as a fair exchange. Catherine, however, hated Chaumont, and regarded it with superstitious awe, as an ill-

omened spot, to which, therefore, she would have been rejoiced to consign her quondam rival. Diane does not seem to have had a greater fancy for Chaumont than the queen; she accepted it with a spirit of indifference, in submission to the queen's proposal, but never resided there. She retired to the Château d'Anêt, another munificent gift of her royal lover, where she died, six years after, at the age of sixty-six. Diane was, therefore, sixty years of age at the time of Henri's death, while he was only forty-one, and yet she knew how to preserve her ascendency over him, and to retain his passionate affection to the very last. Chaumont was left to Diane's eldest daughter, Madame la Duchesse de Bouillon.

Catherine now repaired, with all her court, to Chenonceaux, where she formally established herself; but it was necessary that she, in her turn, should render it essentially her own. The Florentine princess could not but acknowledge the consummate taste with which Diane had expended the king's money on this elegant retreat, yet she could not bear to reside in a palace, the creation of another mind, and that other her despised rival. She constructed an entirely new wing, large enough to accommodate all her suite, and added two long galleries, for the purpose of giving hunting banquets by torch-light, and indulging in other festivities then in vogue. She sent to Italy for statues to embellish the halls and chambers, and enriched the walls with panels and medallions of the choicest marbles. And here did Catherine, now Regent of France, hold her court; here she received the most distinguished persons of the day, and foreign princes and men of letters, among whom was no less illustrious a man than the poet Tasso, who came to France in the suite of the Cardinal d'Este. The author of "Jerusalem Delivered" could not but be charmed with a locality so poetical, and a place which

seemed to be always in holiday garb. He could not forget it, even in his own bright southern home, and, after he got back to Italy, he still spoke in raptures of this fairy-land:—

"La terra molle, e lieta, e dilettosa
Simili a se gli abitator', produce."

Mary Stuart too, the infant bride of sixteen, whose beautiful little head had to sustain the burden of two crowns, passed part of her brief married life, which may be said to have ended with its honeymoon, in this favoured retreat. Like a rainbow, bright and lovely, yet a creation made of smiles and tears, she appeared within the sunny gardens of Chenonceaux; a moment more and she was gone—gone thence, and gone for ever from her beautiful France, the land of her innocent childhood, and of hopes destined never to be realised! We seemed to feel her presence when they took us into a large oak-panelled chamber, furnished in the finest Renaissance taste, and told us it was just as she left it. There stood the carved cabinets and chairs, and the carved oak bedstead, hung with rich crimson-satin damask, in which she slept; the polished floor she trod, the very glass (the first Venetian glass ever brought to France) which had reflected her face—how real that seemed!—the toilet table before which she sat, and the tapestried walls that echoed her words, her prayers—perhaps, even then, her sighs!

Catherine de Medicis was at Chenonceaux when the Duc d'Anjou, afterwards King of Poland, and finally Henri III. of France, returned victorious from the battle of Montcontour. The joy she experienced at this event was so great that she exclaimed, "Henceforward let Chenonceaux be known only as 'Bonnes Nouvelles.'" This idea, however, was not adopted, and Chenonceaux retained its original nomenclature. In 1577, when Henri III. returned from Poland to ascend the throne of

France, Catherine de Medicis gave a grand banquet at Chenonceaux, to celebrate the occurrence. The details of these festivities, as related in the "Journal du Règne de Henri III.," are impressively suggestive of the scandalous immorality of this court. The entertainment is said to have cost more than 100,000 livres, which sum was raised, under the name of a loan, from among the wealthiest of the king's servants, who very soon reimbursed themselves, with interest, out of the pockets of the people—such was the license of the times.

On the death of Catherine, at Blois, in 1589, Chenonceaux became, by her bequest, the property of Louise de Vaudemont, the neglected but faithful wife, and inconsolable widow, of Henri III. She had been residing here alone for six months when, after a futile endeavour to conceal from her the fatal truth, news was brought her of the assassination of her royal husband by Jacques Clement, in the same year. Louise survived till 1601, and passed her widowhood here, the rooms she occupied being hung with black velvet; over the mantel-piece still remain inscribed these words, "*Sævi monumenta doloris.*" The queen, whose whole life was now spent in works of charity, clothed in weeds of white, and known as "La Reine Blanche," was venerated by all the country round.

With the "white queen" disappeared the royal prestige of Chenonceaux: it passed into the hands of Françoise de Mercœur, wife of César, Duc de Vendôme, natural son of Henri IV. by Gabrielle d'Estrées; then into the family of Bourbon-Condé. In 1733 it was sold to Claude Dupin; and Madame Dupin, being distinguished by her literary tastes, established what we may almost term a *salon bleu*, within the old historic walls. Thither—as to the Hôtel de Rambouillet—resorted the *beaux esprits* of the time: among these, Chenonceaux had the distinction of receiving within its pre-

cincts, as guests of Madame Dupin—Buffon, Condillac, Mably, Fontenelle, Mairan, Bernardin de St. Pierre the graceful author of "Paul et Virginie," le Comte de Tressau, Lord Bolingbroke, Sainte-Pelaye, and Voltaire; here met Mesdames de Boufflers, de Luxembourg, de Rohan-Chabot, de Foulquier, de Mirepoix, de Tencin, du Deffand, while Madame Dupin presided, as another Arthénice, over the brilliant intellectual *réunions* attracted by her wit and genius.

M. and Madame Dupin selected as tutor for their only son the author of "Emile." He was presented to them in 1743, by their son-in-law, M. Dupin de Francueuil, and the education of the young M. de Chenonceaux was unhesitatingly confided to him. M. Dupin, himself a man of distinguished talents, knew how to appreciate those who approached him, and was not only admired for the cultivation of his mind and the natural gifts he possessed, but for the urbanity of his manners and the refinement of his tastes.

In Rousseau's "Confessions" we find his description of his first visit to the château, which was, for some years after, his home:—"In 1747," he says, "we went to spend the autumn in Touraine, at the Château de Chenonceaux. . . . . A great deal of amusement went on in this beautiful place, and a capital table was kept; I became as plump as a monk. We had music every evening, and I composed several trios, the harmonies of which were very powerful. We also had private dramatic performances, and I wrote a comedy at three weeks' notice, in three acts, entitled *L'Engagement Téméraire*, which will be found among my papers, but which has little merit beyond its lively tone. I also composed, while there, several minor works; among others, a piece of poetry called "L'Allée de Sylvie," from an avenue in the park of that name, bordering the Cher. All these amusements were confined to our leisure,

and interfered in no way with the work on chemistry I was engaged in for Madame Dupin."

Rousseau, however, was modest as to his works; for in the little theatre within the château was also represented, for the first time, his *Devin du Village.*

Every portion of the edifice, which remains in wonderful preservation, contains objects of interest. We have spoken of the apartments reserved for her solitary occupation by the sorrowing Louise de Vaudemont; and we find a singular contrast to these in the coquettish *salon* of Madame Diane. In this latter room is a quaint old portrait of Rabelais, said to be by Leonardo da Vinci; but it seems very doubtful whether, after he was located by his royal and munificent patron in the Château de Clou, the veteran painter ever executed a portrait: and when he died, in 1519, Rabelais, who was born in 1483, was not more than thirty-six, and his reputation at that time was not sufficiently well established to justify us in supposing he would have been painted by so remarkable an artist. This, too, is a grotesque-looking head, and of a much older man.

In the throne-room we saw some good pictures, and among them a copy, by Gerard, of the famous profile portrait of François I., by Titian, now in the Louvre. The ceilings are most elaborate in ornamentation, especially that of the library; while the *salon* of Catherine de Medicis possesses a gorgeous mantel-piece, over which we find an authentic portrait of the queen, and an interesting bust of Agnes Sorel. A full-length portrait of the beautiful Duchesse de Valentinois as Diana Venatrix, by Primaticcio, adorns the dining-hall, which contains likewise a representation of Louis XIII. habited as a Roman, by Carlo Veronese.

Chenonceaux at the present day belongs to M. le Comte Réné de Villeneuve, grandson of Madame Dupin, who was so

highly revered by the whole nation, that, at the sanguinary period of the Revolution, when lawless bands were ravaging the country, taking a malicious pleasure in laying waste the parks and mansions of aristocratic owners, Chenonceaux was spared; and although the insurgents paid their unwelcome visit to the peaceful and rustic shades of Chenonceaux, they respected the edifice and its surrounding territory, and left it and its inhabitants unharmed: all they required of Madame Dupin was that she should burn her titles of nobility and some few historical pictures. Madame Dupin died, at an honoured and venerable age, in her ninety-fourth year, in 1799.

Of the chapel we must say a few words: it is a great ornament to the elevation, with its six long, foliated, apsidal windows and delicate tracery. Within, the vaulted roof at once strikes the eye by the elegance of its proportions; while the beautiful *tribune* forms a very happy feature. In the confessional of François I. is a head of Our Lord, supposed to be the work of Michael Angelo, and worthy of his conception.

ANÊT.

Anêt a vast Ruin, on the Borders of the Forest of Dreux—Exceptional Site—Saussaye—Taste and Costliness of this Palace—Men of Genius employed—Pleasure-grounds—Description by Androuet du Cerceau—Early History of the Châtellenie—Diane de Poitiers; her History; early Marriage; Louis de Brézé; interesting Occasion of her first Appearance at Court; its Result; her Father; filial Devotion—Jean de Poitiers' sad Fate—Diane's religious Opinions; those of the Duchesse d'Etampes; her Rivals in François' Favour—Françoise de Châteaubriand—Mademoiselle d'Heilly—Jean de Brosses—Mademoiselle d'Heilly's petty Vengeance on her Rival—Noble Conduct of the Comtesse de Châteaubriand—This Favourite and Clement Marot—Clement Marot and the Duchesse d'Etampes—Gallant Poetry of the Period—François' Effusions—Treachery and Heartlessness of the Duchesse d'Etampes—Diane de Poitiers and the Boy Prince—Catherine de Medicis and her Rival—Diane's Hour of Triumph; her Moderation—Anêt now called Dianêt—Anêt under Henri II.; employs Philibert Delorme—Improvements and Ornamentations described by Androuet du Cerceau—The King's Generosity to Diane—Château de Limoux—Palma Cayet's Observation—Wedding Gift to the Duc de Joyeuse—Diane's Mode of Life; her unvarying Health; her Beauty; its enduring Nature: Clement Marot's Compliment to her—Death of the King—Diane's changed Position—Catherine's Tyranny—Diane's Medal—Brantôme's Description of Diane's Beauty at the Time of her Death; his Partiality for her; accused of retaining the King's Affections by Sorcery; Pasquier and De Thou maintain this Idea; her *Devise;* Death; Tomb—Anêt under Henri IV.—Given to the Vendômes—The Duke of Rosny's Reception there—The Duchesse d'Aumale—Henri IV. at Anêt—Dreux—La Grise—Anêt given to the Duchesse du Maine; comes to the Duc de Penthièvre; becomes a Poor-house; destroyed at the Revolution—The Portico removed to Paris.

LE CHATEAU D'ANÊT.

"It was a shady and sequestered scene
Like those famed gardens of Boccaccio,
Planted with his own laurels, ever green,
And roses that for endless summers blow;
And there were fountain springs to overflow
Their marble basins, and cool green arcades
Of tall o'erarching sycamores, to throw
Athwart the dappled path their dancing shades."

HOOD.

WE have had occasion to mention the Château d'Anêt in connection with its—perhaps too—famous mistress, and as, doubtless, the interest of our readers has, like our own, been aroused by the mention of this historical locality, we offer them a sketch of its aspect and its annals. For the former, an extensive but shapeless ruin is all that now remains of that once rich and elaborate specimen of Renaissance architecture! The scattered outline marked by its crumbling and deserted stones reveals nought but the wide-spread limits of what was erewhile a regal mansion. There, where of old châtelains and kings played their ephemeral part, where feudal lords and chivalrous monarchs trod, and fought, and unconsciously wove their portion of the glittering web of mediæval glory, as they sped their path through life's chequered mazes—what find we now? . . . . . a vast and vacant solitude! The noontide hum of the short-lived insect by day, and the shriek of the owl or the fluttering of the bat by night, are the only sounds of life that awaken those silent echoes; while the wintry blast drives the fallen leaves as it

sweeps through the broken archway, and whistles cheerlessly through the widening chinks.

We were scarcely prepared for this woeful wreck of what once had been so stately, and when, on emerging from the magnificent Forest of Dreux, our expectant eye vainly sought the symbols of a castellated edifice, and only fell on these scanty and neglected remnants—these rags and tatters of regal splendour, a feeling of disappointment and sadness stole over us.

A more exquisite site for a castle could hardly be imagined. Anêt stands—or rather stood—in the midst of the smiling valley of the Eure, which here forms several islands, while beyond it are verdant pastures. On the north is a steep rise, never cultivated before the Revolution, but now covered with rich harvests; on the south, a gentle slope, clothed with vines and crowned with wood, gives repose to the eye; while the east opens upon a delightful view of distant country. In the centre of this pleasing picture, too little known to the lovers of beautiful scenery, is the village of Saussaye, where a thriving manufacture of paper is carried on, and beyond are the picturesque ruins of Sorel, perched on a peak of the rock.

We sat down upon a broken stone, and tried to reconstruct, in imagination, that grand and costly monument, the production of so many contemporary geniuses — imagined by Philibert Delorme, enriched by Jean Goujon, decorated by Cousin—containing all the luxury that art, gallantry, and wealth could devise. The site was selected with consummate discrimination, and the edifice was one of the most picturesque of its time. We speak, of course, of the later château: that which it replaced was a very different structure, built in the severer style of those utilitarian days, when châteaux were planned for defence against a barbarous foe and a prison

for his safe keeping—not devised as a gilded cage for a royal favourite, and the monarch who voluntarily shared its silken captivity.

The gardens and park are now a waste; and yet these, too, were once laid out with elaborate taste and reckless expense; they contained a mass of costly caprices, traces of some of which still remain,—mysterious groves, vast meadows, numerous canals and bridges, embowered summer-houses, and plashing waterfalls; in the centre was a retired nook, called *l'Ile d'amour*, surrounded by a small enclosed forest, artificially contrived for preserving wild beasts; and this was bounded by an almost unique *pelouse*, serving as a public promenade. There was also a magnificent avenue of horse-chestnuts, destroyed in 1792. Such was Anêt seventy years ago.

We turn to an interesting description written while Anêt was in the first *éclat* of its splendour, by Androuet du Cerceau, whose most curious work, published within a few years of the death of Madame Diane de Poitiers, gives, together with the quaint old plan, section, and elevation of this extensive palace, the following account of the disposal of the vast grounds which surrounded it:—

"Icelles places," says this then distinguished architect, "sont repliés comme par parquets, les unes de préz, les autres de taillis, autres de bois, de garennes, d'arbres fruitiers, et viniers, et iceux parquets sont séparez par allées, et entre chascune allée et parquet, en une partie, sont canaux. La haironnerie est comprise en ces places; aussi l'orengerie, en laquelle est un bastiment bien plaisant; les vollières à oyseaux aussi un bastiment ioignant le iardin, auquel est pratiquée vne salle fermée d'une canne, en ordre d'vne demie circonferance. En somme, tout ce qu'ung chascung désireroit pour rendre vn lieu parfaict est là sur le derrière, et hors d'icelle place est vn Hostel-Dieu,

auci vn logis bien basty; et, prochain iceluy passe la ditte rivière de Dure."

We may thus form some notion of what Anêt must have been in its palmy days. The confluence of two rivers is always a happy incident for an architect to seize upon, and Anêt was advisedly placed at the point where in sportive rivalry seem to meet, the limpid streams of the Eure and the Vesgne.

Near the *emplacement* of the château, and at the extremity of the Forest of Dreux, the little bourg of Anêt has been built.

The early history of this *châtellenie* is very obscure, but the first seigneur whose name appears in the title is Robert, who lived in 1063. In 1156 mention is made of one Simon d'Anêt; but in 1195, says the author of the History of Chartres, according to a charter dated at Anêt, and sealed with the *grand sceau*, "les religieux de St. Pierre de Chartres donnèrent leur moulins d'Anêt à bail au Roi Philippe-Auguste, moyennant 6 livres parisis de cens par an, payables le jour de S. Remi; et faute de payement, 5 sols d'amende par chaque jour." This was a right regal example of submission to law. In 1318, the *propriété* d'Anêt belonged to Philippe, Comte d'Evreux, brother of Philippe le Bel. Charles le Mauvais, Comte d'Evreux and Roi de Navarre, built there a fortified castle, with turrets, subsequently destroyed by Charles le Sage, who confiscated the *châtellenie* of Anêt to his own use. A new castle was built here; and in 1444 Charles VII., desirous of rewarding the services of Pierre de Brézé, who had driven the English out of Normandy, made over to him the *château* and lands of Anêt.

These lands had, nevertheless, been in the tenure of the Princes of Bearn, part of whose fiefs they formed; and documents exist showing that one of its old fortified citadels inherited and transmitted the name of "Palais des Rois de Navarre."

Diane de Poitiers, whose name is so entirely identified with this spot, was born in 1500, and being the only and fondly-loved child of the Comte de St. Vallier, became his constant companion, following him even in the hardy exercise of the chase at the tender age of six years! Her youth was one of remarkable precocity, and her beauty and intelligence soon became a theme of marvel among all the neighbouring *châtelains*. She was only ten years old when she was sought in marriage by, and affianced to, Louis de Brézé, Comte de Maulevrier, Grand Séneschal de Normandie, grandson of Pierre de Brézé, and descended, on the mother's side, from Agnes Sorel and Charles VII. He was at this time a widower, and considerably older than his infant bride, who was married to him at the age of fourteen—some say twelve.

In the year 1525, her father, Jean de Poitiers, Comte de St. Vallier, attainted of high treason, and tried for the part he had taken with Charles, Connétable de Bourbon, against the king, was found guilty, and condemned to be beheaded. A short interval only was allowed in those days to elapse between conviction and execution, and Diane was in despair; nevertheless, she resolved that no effort should be wanting on her part that might save her father's life. Accompanied by her husband, she repaired in all haste, and for the first time, to court, and sought the king. The position held by the Séneschal obtained for her the coveted interview; and, admitted into the royal presence, her first impulse was to throw herself at the king's feet, and implore the royal clemency. François' heart was not such as to resist the prayers, or to listen unmoved to the entreaties, of a beautiful young woman; he raised her with his wonted grace and gallantry, and assured her in the most considerate words that her father's life was safe. We are further assured by one of the historiographers of the time, that, with

that generous spirit of chivalry which so eminently distinguished the susceptible monarch, he delicately abstained at that time from any allusion to the impression that Diane's marvellous beauty had made upon his accessible affections. The fair suppliant poured out her thanks with grateful effusion, and begged she might be the bearer of the order which was to set her father free. She hastened to his dungeon, to convey to him the joyful tidings; but, prompt as had been her appeal, and instantaneous its success, the pardon had been too tardy for its recipient. Diane was admitted to her father's prison, but only to be overwhelmed with terror and dismay at the sight of a man, whose bowed form and face, shaded by snow-white locks, she did not even recognise, raving in the wild unconsciousness of delirium. So sudden had the result of his disgrace been upon his sensitive mind, that his very gaolers would not believe that the broken and distracted maniac of to-day was their prisoner of yesterday, and declared that St. Vallier had adroitly eluded their vigilance, and had escaped, leaving a substitute in his cell. What the terrors of that night must have been which produced so fearful an awakening, none but the wretched prisoner himself could know; but it was long before Jean de Poitiers even partially recovered his reason, and when his intelligence partially returned, he had become an infirm old man. His health finally gave way; his feebleness of mind and body from that time continued to increase, and he died not long after, broken and decrepit. The malady which fell upon him has passed into a proverb, and is known as the "fièvre de Saint-Vallier." *

* Du Bellay's account of this historical episode is as follows. After enumerating and recording the several fates of the accomplices in the defection of the Connétable de Bourbon, he takes up that of Jean de Poitiers, and says, "Il n'en fust pas ainsy de Saint-Vallier, quoi qu'il protestat qu'il avoit fait son possible

Diane had two daughters, one married to the Duc de Bouillon, the other to the Duc d'Aumale. She was left a widow in 1531, and, after the death of her husband, retained the title of Grande Séneschale, which she had enjoyed during his lifetime, and adopted the colours of widowhood, black and white, which she always afterwards preserved. Diane appears to have been sincerely attached to her husband, and to have mourned his loss, though history leaves us little doubt of her infidelity to him. She was an ambitious woman, and being already in an elevated position by right of birth, she had little to seek in the way of title or fortune: she was ambitious on the score of her royal admirer as well as her own, and, like Agnes Sorel, exercised her influence over him in urging him to energetic measures and valiant exploits. Her greatest ardour was shown in her defence of the Catholic faith; and as early as 1525 she made herself one of the Guise faction, using her best endeavours with Louise de Savoie—Regent during her son's

pour détourner Bourbon de ses projets. Son procés dura jusqu'au commencement de l'année suivante et il fust condamné à mort. Heureusement—ou malheureusement—pour lui, il avoit une fille charmante nommée Diane mariée depuis peu, à Brézé, l'un des gentilshommes qui avoient découvert la conspiration. Cette jeune dame, qui n'avoit point encore paru à la Cour, et qui devoit par la suite y jouer un si grand rôle, vint avec son époux solliciter la grâce du condamné, et ne l'obtint qu'aveque beaucoup de peine. Ce fut sur l'échafaud seulement, que cet infortuné, consumé par une maladie de langueur, apprit qu'on lui accordait la vie. Cet événement offrit pour la première fois aux regards de la Cour, la célèbre Diane de Poitiers. On a pretendu que le Roy frappé de sa beauté, n'avoit cédé à ses prières qu'à des conditions déshonorantes, et que son père n'avoit pas survécu à un pardon qui lui auroit coûté si cher. Mais cet indigne abus de la puissance royale n'accorde nullement avec le caractère noble de François Ier, qui d'ailleurs fut loin d'octroyer une grâce entière à Saint-Vallier, puis qu'il le fit monter sur l'échafaud, d'où il fust réconduit en prison pour n'en sortir que quelques années plus tard. Cependant, si l'on s'en rapporte à des lettres MSS. qui existent à la Bibliothèque du Roy, il est certain que Diane fut éblouie de la Cour de François et qu'elle ne retourna pas sans regret dans le Château de son mari. Après la mort de Brézé elle y réparut, et ce fut alors, qu'agée de 34 ans, elle inspira au fils du Roy, qui en avait 14, une passion aussi forte que durable."

captivity in Spain—to obtain the erection of the Comté de Lorraine into a Duché.

Later, when the favourite who succeeded her, and who appears to have adopted any opinions that served her purpose, placed herself at the head of the reformed faction, Diane headed the Catholic body, and proclaimed herself the opponent of her upstart rival. This opposition was carried on upon every possible occasion; and Diane and the Duchesse d'Etampes became, for the time, respectively the representatives not only of two religions and two policies, but of two contending influences in art, literature, science,—everything, in fact, which occupied men's minds in this refined and polished age. This struggle for pre-eminence was, however, soon to be brought to an issue: one party belonged to the day, the other to the morrow; and Diane, who knew that she must ultimately win, bided her opportunity with the consciousness of her coming triumph.

It is time, however, we said something of how this came about, and how it happened that the paradise of Anêt was clouded by the eclipse of that sunshine of royal favour which had erewhile gilded its bowers.

Notwithstanding Diane's masculine intelligence and gifted mind, notwithstanding her beautiful face and graceful form, François was not irretrievably chained. One luckless day, the roving eye of the volatile monarch fell upon a form yet more fair, a face yet more bewitching; and though younger and apparently more naïve, the new beauty well understood how to ensnare the royal captive with her wiles. He came, he saw, and . . . . . was conquered! Anne de Pisseleu, alias Mademoiselle d'Heilly, younger by ten years than the reigning favourite, bewitched the sybaritic king by her budding charms. She dared to call Diane "*une vieille ridée*," and was not reproved! Encouraged by this impunity, she boasted that the day of her

birth was that of Diane's marriage; but her wit, her beauty, and her grace, had so enslaved the royal lover, that he forgave her everything, and she was soon sole mistress of his heart.

A curious *étude de mœurs* is to be found in the fact, that notwithstanding the open recognition of her position as "favorite du Roi," the daughter of the Seigneur de Meudon "avait sa religion," which she loudly proclaimed to be that of the "*réforme*," and when the time came, according to the system of these days, to provide her with a husband whose name should give her the requisite privileges at court, she insisted on his being chosen among the Calvinists. It might have been supposed there would be some difficulty in finding, among those who professed the most austere principles, a man who would consent openly to set at defiance the laws of honour and honesty, and voluntarily accept so infamous a bargain. Such a man, nevertheless, offered himself to fill this post of ignominy; and in 1526 Anne de Pisseleu became first Madame Jean de Brosses, and soon after Duchesse d'Etampes. Jean de Brosses was evidently not very practical in his moral appreciations, but they were doubtless modified by the circumstances of the case; as, however,

"A saint in crape is twice a saint in lawn,"

so a villain in a court dress is only half a villain in rags, and the bribe proved too tempting for flesh and blood to resist. Jean was raised at once from penury to the possession of landed property to a fabulous amount, a revenue of 50,000 livres, and the title of duke! The scruples even of a Huguenot conscience were not proof against so tangible an argument.

Another of the king's mistresses, who had nevertheless held a powerful ascendency over him, and who was also recklessly set aside for Anne de Pisseleu, was the lovely Françoise de Foix, Comtesse de Châteaubriand; and yet she was a woman calcu-

lated to fascinate the heart of such a man as François. On his return from his Spanish exile, when his mother and sister repaired to Bayonne to meet him, Madame de Châteaubriand appears to have either followed or accompanied them, for Du Bellay, in his account of the interview, says,—"Après qu'il eut rendu à sa mère et à sa sœur ce que la reconnaissance et la nature exigeoient d'un cœur tel que le sien, la Cour observa curieusement l'accueil qu'il feroit à Madame de Châteaubriand;" and no doubt the court was gratified by what it observed: for, alas! absence and the troubles of his unfortunate expedition had changed the king's inconstant affections, and effaced from his heart the image of her who had so long asserted over it an unrivalled sway. He met her with that courtesy and kindness which formed part of his nature; but time had perhaps also tarnished the brilliancy of her charms, and her presence failed to rekindle the spark that had once seemed the light of his life. Françoise's heart misgave her, and she began to fear, however unwillingly, that the hour of her humiliation was at hand; but still she ventured to hope that if the opportunity were given her, she might regain some of her former influence. The new favourite, however, was already usurping her hitherto undisputed place, and she no sooner beheld the blooming young creature of twenty-three, lovely beyond expression, brilliant, full of grace, spirit, and elegance, than she recognised her own inferiority and the folly of attempting to struggle against such a rival. Reluctant, nevertheless, to abandon a position she had so long held with triumph, Françoise lingered about the court, submitting to the mortifications heaped upon her by Madame Louise, the king's mother—hoping against hope that she might yet win back her royal lover to those ties which had heretofore bound him to her, and which had been his happiness during the brightest years of his life. But no! all the passion he had ever felt for

his quondam mistress was extinguished by the brightness of the new flame; and if she had entertained any doubt before, that doubt was converted into certainty now—Mademoiselle d'Heilly went so far as to exact from her lover that he should demand of Madame de Châteaubriand all the jewels he had formerly given her, and bestow them on herself. These jewels, precious as they were intrinsically, possessed value of a very different nature in the eyes of Françoise. There was not one in that costly collection which did not recall some passionate impulse of the king, under the influence of which he had designed and bestowed it; all were symbolical expressions of an affection of which they were now the sole surviving testimony, and to her they were the only consolation she could know. The countess therefore received this message with incredulous surprise; the heartlessness of that cruelty which, after robbing her of her sole treasure, now sought to take from her the very remembrance of having possessed it, cut her to the quick; she, however, assumed a composure she was far from feeling, and sent word that she was then unwell, but that in a day or two the king's command should be complied with. Three days after, the king received back his gems unset and the gold converted into ingots, with the following message: "Be good enough," said she to the friend to whom she confided this delicate mission, "to tell his Majesty that since it is his good pleasure to revoke what he once gave me so liberally, I can have no wish to retain it. I return his gifts intact in weight. As to the *forms* the gold once had, those are my own, and shall never be violated by the curious eyes of any stranger. They are destroyed for others it is true, but on my heart will they ever remain imprinted, for the recollection of them is now all that is left me of what was once so dear." The king listened in silence to these noble words, for he was deeply moved. "She has shown," he said, "more courage and generosity than I

should have expected from a woman." François, be it observed, never entertained a very exalted opinion of the sex, and on the whole we cannot wonder.

We will add a few words in conclusion of the story of this deserted mistress. "Madame de Châteaubriand," proceeds Du Bellay, "was to pay dearly for her short-lived sovereignty at court. She survived her disgrace twelve years, and led a retired life in her own château, where she had much to endure from the temper of her husband, who was even accused of having hastened her death. Marot, whom she had protected during the time of her favour, wrote for her tomb a very philosophical epitaph, of which the following are the concluding lines:—

"De grande beauté, de grâce qui attire,
De bon sçavoir, d'intelligence prompte,
De biens, d'honneurs et mieux que ne raccompte,
Dieu Eternel richement l'étoffa.
O viateur! pour t'abréger le compte,
Cy gist un rien—là, où tout triompha!"

One day after a fatiguing journey, when her complexion had lost something of its usual brilliancy, he improved the occasion by improvising the following lines, redolent of the poetry, no less than of the spirit, of the times:—

"Vous reprendrez,
Je l'affirme par la vie,
Ce teint que vous a osté
La déesse Beauté
Par envie."

To return to the new favourite who thus summarily took the place of Diane de Poitiers and Françoise de Foix. On being put in possession of the Duchy d'Etampes, Mademoiselle d'Heilly received from Clement Marot the following ingenious allegorical poem, transmitted to us by Du Bellay:—

"Ce plaisant val que l'on nomme Tempé
Dont mainte histoire est encore embellie,
Arrousé d'eau, si doux, si attrempé,

Sachez que plus il n'est en Thessalie:
Jupiter roy, qui les cœurs gagne et lie,
L'a de Thessalie en France remué,
Et quelque peu son propre nom mué;
Car pour *Tempé* veut qu'*E-tempe* s'appelle:
Aynsy luy plaist, ainsy l'a situé,
Pour y loger de France la plus belle."

Anne was more youthful, more sparkling, possibly even more beautiful than Diane; she was also not only more learned, but she contrived, with infinite tact, to make her intellectual gifts attractive to her refined and cultivated lover. She attuned her tastes in harmony with his, and knew how to be grave or gay, lively or severe, according to his humour. She succeeded so well in persuading him of her talents, that he was wont to call her, "*La plus savante des belles et la plus belle des savantes*,"* while she was more widely recognised by the title of "*Protectrice et Mécène des beaux esprits.*"

The mature lover—whose second son was old enough and apparently profligate enough to follow his father's example and keep a mistress!—broke out into verse on the occasion of this new passion; and among the tender sonnets he addressed to the bewitching Anne, we select the following gallant expression of his sentiments:—

"Est-il point vrai, ou si je l'ai songé,
Qu'il est besoin m'éloigner et distraire
De notre amour et en prendre congé?
Las! je le veux; et si ne le puis faire,
Que dis-je? veux! c'est du tout le contraire:
Faire le puis, mais ne puis le vouloir;
Car vous avez là réduit mon vouloir,
Que plus tâchez ma liberté me rendre,
Plus empêchez que ne la puisse avoir,
En commandant ce que voulez défendre."

Whatever may have been the charms of her conversation, Anne's heart was not in the right place; and when, with

* This was a favourite form of epigram at the time.

treacherous ingratitude, we find her sacrificing to her own interests those of the king, who had proved himself so generous a lover, and betraying his secret confidences to his enemy Charles Quint, in order to make a friend of him, against the time when her actual influence should fail, we entertain only one feeling towards her—that of unmitigated contempt.

François, nevertheless, was completely subjugated; and for a time Anne de Pisseleu reigned supreme.*

Diane was not long in perceiving the change, and in discovering its cause, she felt the mortification keenly; but her compensation was at hand: and no sooner had she obtained the confidence of Prince Henri, than, throwing aside all moral considerations, and thinking only of the mortification she had received, she resolved to revenge herself on the father by enslaving the son. Henri fell into the snare; and although the prince was then only a child of thirteen!† while Diane was thirty-two—some say forty—she became his mistress, and the ascendency she gained and retained over him was unbounded, while his affection for her subsisted through the whole of his reign, and her power only terminated with his life; yet, strange to say, she was then sixty years of age! The beauty and intelligence of Catherine de Medicis, to whom, nevertheless, Henri was passionately attached, could not separate him from Diane, nor even diminish his affection for her. It is true that he owed her much, and the softening

* Among other costly gifts, whether in jewels or land, bestowed by the king on this grasping favourite, was the beautiful Château de Valençay (Indre). This valuable monument of Renaissance taste was partly designed by the king himself, and is extremely rich in detail as well as unique in its elevation. It has been well preserved, and was used as lately as from 1808 to 1814, as a residence for the Infantas of Spain when detained prisoners by Napoleon I.

† Henri, second son of Francois I., according to Du Bellay, was born at St. Germain-en-Laye on the 31st March, 1518. Henry VIII. of England was his godfather.

and refining influence of her gentle disposition on the manners of the prince surprised all who witnessed the result of his intercourse with her. He had always delighted in violent exercise, rough games, and turbulent amusements; he was also naturally of a hasty and implacable temper, and very summary in his dealings with dependants, who dreaded his haughty and fiery disposition. In Diane's hands, however, his fierce and impetuous character became like wax, and it not only received, but retained, the form into which she succeeded in moulding it. If, however, he acquired from her lessons of gentleness, forbearance, and courtesy, he also gained a taste for dissipation, show, and luxury, and fell into that reckless prodigality which knew no restraint, and so reduced the sources of the country as to pave the way for the misfortunes which overtook it in the course of succeeding reigns.

Henri ascended the throne in 1547, and then Diane became queen in all but the name. It was now her turn to triumph over the *ci-devant* rival who had insulted her in the tenderest point, and had taken a peculiar pleasure in humbling her to the dust. Her first act, accordingly, was to obtain the exile of Madame d'Etampes. "She did not, however," says Du Bellay, "persecute her with the virulence she had it in her power to exercise; she contented herself with banishing her to her own territory, where she led a life of ease and luxury upon the immense wealth she had acquired during her favour with the late monarch. The Duchesse d'Etampes lived more than thirty years in this exile, professing herself a follower of the new religion, and proclaiming herself the ardent protectress of the persecuted Protestants.

Created in 1548 Duchesse de Valentinois, Diane obtained, together with the title, the concession of a right formerly granted for life only, to her mother, by François I., and of

which she reserved all the revenues for the purpose of maintaining, enlarging, and embellishing the Château d'Anêt, now celebrated by the poets of the court, under the name of "Dianêt."

The old castle of the Kings of Navarre was no longer in character with the brilliant fortunes of the all-powerful favourite of the King of France: it was demolished, and upon its ruins was raised the structure she occupied, long considered among the most sumptuous palaces of France. Henri II. employed, as we have said, the most distinguished architect in France, Philibert Delorme, whose name is connected so honourably with the Palace of the Tuileries, to prepare the plans. Philibert Delorme's taste and talent altogether corresponded with the opinion the king had formed of them, and he proved himself in every way worthy to carry out Henri's magnificent intentions, so that his work asserted its place among the finest monuments of the Renaissance. Henri II., who made no secret of his sentiments for the favourite, was desirous that his and his mistress's royal cipher should constitute the basis of the ornamentations. H's and D's interlaced and surmounted by crowns were multiplied on every side; upon the chimneys, upon the panels of the windows, upon the cornices and mouldings: the pretentious and *recherché* taste of the epoch also overloaded the architecture with quivers and bows, and other allegorical symbols of the duchesse, and the crescent everywhere recalled the name of Diane, while her widow's colours—black and white—which were adopted and always worn by Henri, were introduced amid all the polychrome of the gorgeous decorations.

The principal entrance to the castle was embellished and surmounted by an elegant, but somewhat pedantic design, executed in bronze; it consisted of a hunting group, elabo-

rately finished, in the centre of which a figure of *Diane chasseresse* conveyed a portrait of the fair châtelaine.

Above, in the centre of the pediment, was an ingeniously-contrived clock, around which a similar idea was repeated, and as beautifully executed. In the midst was a stag, followed by a pack of hounds; hounds and stag remained motionless, each hour, until the minute hand touched twelve, when the stag began to move, and with one foot struck the hour, while the dogs barked to indicate the fractions of the hour.

The dial marked the hours, the months, the signs of the zodiac, the age of the moon. This entrance-court was surrounded by a gallery supported by thirty-six columns, and contained several fountains; within it, was a chapel of very curious construction, circular in plan. The walls and ceilings of the rooms were extremely rich in effect, being covered with precious marbles, mirrors, and beautiful paintings. In one of these, the walls were panelled with pictures of the Muses; in another, were represented the different operations of agriculture; while others were adorned with battle-pieces, chivalrous games, and hunting-scenes. In one gallery, 65 feet long and 35 feet broad, were the campaigns of the Duc de Vendôme, the figures being life-size.*

Diane loved this château, on which so much taste and time had been expended by herself and the king. The latter frequently spent days, if not weeks, at Anêt, attracted by the beauty of the spot and the interest he took in this building of his own creation, as well as in the graces and fascinations of the bewitching Grande Sénéschale.

The king was not content with this liberality: besides this and the Château de Chenonceaux, he bestowed on Diane the

* Androuet du Cerceau has left us, together with the detailed description of those curiosities, some extremely quaint and minute drawings of the same. His work is very rare.

Château of Limoux, which she was extremely desirous of possessing, as having been one of the "*propriétés*" given to her hated rival, the Duchesse d'Etampes, by François I. Limoux was built by Poncher, Bishop of Paris and Treasurer of France, who, having had a dispute with Louise de Savoie, Duchesse d'Angoulême, mother of François, was accused of having attempted to obtain the withdrawal of the regency from her during the king's captivity in Spain, which it was said he wished to prolong. For these offences he was imprisoned at Vincennes, and was finally beheaded at Montfaucon. His goods were confiscated, and Limoux having fallen into the hands of François, seemed to him an appropriate present for Madame d'Etampes, to whom he presented it in 1536. The fortunes of this château are singular. Palma Cayet says—"Il passa, du tems de François I., par les *griffes* de Madame d'Etampes, ensuite quand vint Henri II., par les *pattes* de la Duchesse de Valentinois, et après, sous Henri III., il est venu aux *poings* du Duc de Joyeuse, de sorte qu'on dirait qu'il n'a été construit par ce malheureux trésorier que pour devenir la proie de tous les mignons et mignonnes de nos rois." It seems that on Diane's death the Château de Limoux came into the possession of her daughter, Madame de Bouillon, and was purchased of her, in 1581, by the king, who gave it—a right royal present—to his favourite, the Duc de Joyeuse, as a wedding gift: "The Cardinal de Bourbon," says Pierre de l'Estoile, "undertook the ordering and expenses of the wedding festivities."

It is said that Diane never had a day's illness until the time of her death, and regulated her physical life with great precision. She bathed in cold water all the year round, and washed her face with rain-water, never using any cosmetic. She rose every morning at six, mounted her horse and rode for two hours, after which she returned to bed and read till twelve.

By this singular arrangement she succeeded in acquainting herself with all the then known literature: her tastes were cultivated, and men of letters could always count on her patronage and good offices. Diane had a high consciousness of the dignity of her birth, and showed it in the reply she made to Henri, who was desirous of publicly recognising a daughter he had by her. "J'étais née," said she, "pour avoir de vous des enfans légitimes; si j'ai été votre maîtresse, c'est que je vous aimais; mais jamais je ne souffrirai qu'un arrêt me déclare votre concubine." Her theory seems to have been considerably more elevated than her practice.

Diane must have been very beautiful. She is described as having the most fascinating eyes, a clear and brilliant complexion, teeth like pearls, and hair of silky texture and raven hue. She was fully conscious of her attractions, and piqued herself on her youthful appearance. She caused Boyard, Secrétaire des Finances, to be sent into exile for uttering disparaging remarks on her person.

Clement Marot, the court-butterfly, the most serious business of whose life seems to have consisted in fluttering round the belles who adorned the precincts of majesty, and addressing quaint verses to them, has left, among others, the following testimony to her charms:—

"Estre Phœbus bien souvent je désire,
Non pour cognoistre herbes divinement
Car la douleur que mon cœur veult écrire
Ne se guerit par herbe aulcunement;
Non pour avoir ma place au firmament,
Non pour son arc encontre amour saisir,
Car à mon Roy ne veulx être rebelle:
Estre Phœbus seulement je désir,
Pour estre aimé de Diane la Belle."

The reign of Henri II. was that of Diane, for, as we have said, she maintained her ascendency over him to the last, and

he never had any other mistress; but no sooner had the wound from Montgommery's lance * been pronounced fatal than Catherine, whose impatience to be revenged on her detested rival could brook no delay, sent orders to her to retire immediately from Court—for she had her apartments in the Louvre—and to give up to her the crown jewels.

"Is the king dead?" inquired Diane, in reply.

"Not yet, madam," answered the envoy, "but he cannot live out the day."

"In that case I am still independent, and I wish my enemies to know that even when his Majesty shall be no more, I fear them not. If the king should die, my heart will evermore be too sad even to perceive any insults they may please to offer me."

The king died that day week, and the next morning Catherine sent to demand the instant surrender of Chenon-

* Pierre de l'Estoile gives the following concise account of this singular occurrence:—"Ce fut en 1559, le jour du mariage de sa fille ainée la Princesse Elizabeth de France avec Philippe II. roi d'Espagne, que le Roy Henri II. courant en lice vis-à-vis des Tournelles et de la Bastille, fut frapé à l'œil et rudement atteint d'un coup de lance par Gabriel comte de Montgommery, capitaine de ses gardes. Ce seigneur fut comme forcé par le Roy de courir et tirer contre luy; S. M. luy fit même bailler une lance en disant: 'Je ne courreray plus que ceste fois: c'est un coup de faveur.' The king," he proceeds, "having fallen on receiving the blow, he was carried to the Tournelles, where he died eleven days after, on the 10th July; and the banquet-hall was converted into a chapelle for the corpse. The Huguenots, taking note that the king had received his death-wound, and had lost one eye, opposite the Bastille, where were detained several counsellors, and amongst others Anne Du Bourg, who had been seized by the Capitaine de Lorges, of whom the king had sworn he would see him burnt alive, 'de ses deux yeux,' made the following quatrain upon the event:—

"'Ludicra dum tractas impensiùs, en tibi vita
Stringitur, et miseræ mortis imago ruit.
Seria si regni memor egisses ut decuit te,
O Rex, vita magis morsque beata foret.'"

Montgommery, the innocent cause of the king's death, was not pursued for this offence; but he was beheaded in 1574.

ceaux, which she had long sorely coveted. The queen offered her Chaumont in exchange, as she had recently taken a great dislike to that place, and wished to be rid of it, having an idea that it had brought her ill-luck. Diane was thoroughly disgusted at the queen's proceedings, but resistance was no longer possible, and she had the good sense *de s'exécuter avec grâce.* She accepted Chaumont, which she afterwards bequeathed to her eldest daughter, the Duchesse de Bouillon; but, although it bears on different portions of its decorations the cipher and symbols of Diane, she never resided there. She retired to Anêt in 1559, where she led the life of a widowed queen.

Diane is the only "royal favourite" on record, for whom a medal was ever struck. Hers may be seen at the Hôtel de la Monnaie, in Paris, where, if we remember rightly, she is represented as a beautiful woman crushing Cupid beneath her feet, with the motto, "*Omnium, victorem, vici.*"

The Calvinists, who naturally hated the Duchesse de Valentinois, have accused her of admitting Clement Marot into the ranks of her favoured lovers, and others have charged her with receiving the gallant attentions of the Connétable Anne de Montmorenci, but we find nothing in the pages of the contemporary chroniclers to justify these suspicions. Brantôme—who, however, we must remember, loves to draw flattering pictures of the great and powerful—paints her in much more favourable colours, and entirely passes over the regretable points of her character. "I visited her," he says, "about six months before her death, and found her still so beautiful that a heart of stone must have been moved at the sight of her exquisite grace; and yet, not long before this, she had broken her leg upon the pavement at Orleans, riding on horseback, and holding herself dexterously as she was wont, but the horse fell, and slipped under her. One would have

thought that the shock of the fall, as well as the accident, would have altered her beautiful countenance—but not at all; her beauty, her grace, and her elegance, were still such as they had always been. It is grievous that the earth should cover so beautiful a form! Madame Diane was affable, charitable, and generous; the people may well pray that no king might ever have a worse favourite than she."

Brantôme adds that she was a good Catholic, and hated "*ceux de la religion.*" He makes no comment—neither, indeed, have any of the other chroniclers—upon the private life of Diane, whose anomalous character is almost incomprehensible in the present day. The fact of her high birth and virtuous antecedents aggravates the immorality of those passages of her life which, happily, we do not find often paralleled even in those profligate times; for depraved indeed must have been the state of society, when the court could tolerate without scandal the presence of a woman who had been successively mistress to a father and a son!

The power Diane exercised over the king has been attributed to sorcery, but the magic that bewitched him consisted in the charm of her conversation, the brilliancy of her wit, the gentleness of her disposition, and the elegance of her tastes; nevertheless, Nicolas Pasquier has affirmed that "she held the king's affections by virtue of a ring which she gave him, and which he always wore." The king having fallen ill, the Duchesse de Nemours, "who," says he, "gave me the story," had come to visit him, and was entreated by the queen to withdraw this ring from the king's finger. The duchesse accomplished the manœuvre, and retired, on which the king called the usher, and desired him to admit no one into his room. During this time Madame Diane presented herself two or three times, and the *entrée* was refused her. Surprised at the novelty of the circum-

stance, and suspecting some treachery, she came a fourth time, forced the *consigne*, and walked straight up to the king's bed, when, finding that the ring was no longer on his finger, she asked him what he had done with it. The king told her the Duchesse de Nemours had carried it off, on which she sent, in the king's name, to demand its immediate restitution, and, herself, replaced it on his finger.

Pasquier, as well as De Thou, is disposed to propagate the idea of the intervention of sorcery in this affection of the king for Diane, but Catherine appears to have been the instigatrix of this theory, as it was less humiliating for her to suppose her husband bewitched, than to admit he preferred another woman to herself, on the grounds of either physical or moral superiority.

The crescent-moon, with the motto, "*Donec totum impleat orbem,*" was Henri's *devise* as well as Diane's, and had been selected by him, while yet Dauphin, as symbolical of the imperfect and borrowed light with which he shone during the noontide splendour of his father.

Diane was buried within the chapel of her château, and, strangely enough, that chapel has withstood the violence of the elements, and the yet rougher usage of man, more bravely than the remainder of the structure; but, though we still see the cupola which covered the tomb of Diane, the monument erected to her memory is no longer there. It was carried to Paris in 1793, when her remains were sacrilegiously torn from their sepulture.

The grandeur of the Château d'Anêt did not forsake it on the death of its mistress; on the contrary, its celebrity considerably increased. Brought as a dowry, by her second daughter, to the house of Mercœur-Lorraine, it was advanced from a *châtellenie* to a *principauté* towards the end of the sixteenth century, and

was then owned by the illustrious family of Vendôme, illegitimate descendants of Henri IV. by Gabrielle d'Estrées. Then did the court once more betake itself to the château by the long-forgotten road. The hum of men, and the activity of busy life, with its domestic details and its recurring festivities, once more resounded in the deserted palace of the Duchesse de Valentinois, while the princes of the House of Vendôme not only led a festive life, but carried out extensive improvements, both in the edifice and the grounds.

We next find it in the occupation of the Lorraine family, and learn from Rosny how, at the close of the sixteenth century, the Duchesse d'Aumale, daughter of the Duc d'Elbœuf, entertained there a representative of royalty. This confidential servant of Henri IV. had been sent to Rouen on a mission of importance. He was furnished with full powers to negotiate with the Sieur de Villars, at that time maintaining the siege of that city against the king, pending the conversion of the latter to the Catholic faith. Sully accordingly started from Chartres, having arranged to halt on his way at Anêt, not only from motives of convenience, but because he had been requested by the Duchesse d'Aumale to give her a *rendez-vous* at the château, where she was to meet him, having obtained for that purpose, through the intermediation of Rosny himself, a passport signed by the king.

Having arrived at the village, attended by twelve or fifteen gentlemen, they put up, he says, in the "*meilleure hostelrie*" (there could not have been much choice!), and sending for the "*maistre d'hôtel,*" ordered supper to be prepared, while the Duke went to visit Madame d'Aumale. This princess, who foresaw the decline of the League party, and who was in very needy circumstances, received him with great civility, and made a point, he says, "of showing him all the courtesy which

those who are seeking favour are wont to exhibit towards those in whose power it is to obtain it for them; but all these attentions and politenesses proved very inconvenient to the guest on whom they were bestowed; for, after having conducted him through the superb gardens, courts, halls, rooms, galleries, and cabinets to prolong the discourse with which she was entertaining him, she ended by entreating him with so much instance to remain and sup with her, that, being apprehensive of offending her, he allowed himself to be persuaded, and dismissed all his gentlemen-in-waiting to the hotel to supper, retaining only one page to attend upon him."

But the supper was so long preparing that he began to think it was altogether a fiction, and when at last it did appear, it was so meagre and badly served, the meats so hard, the bread so coarse, the wine so sour, and the table-linen so dirty and damp, that its effect was to destroy the Duke's appetite. And, although such a specimen of Madame d'Aumale's hospitality ought to have sufficed to prevent his being deceived a second time, yet she was so pressing in her invitations to him to take a bed at the château, that he again yielded, but very much against his inclination.

It is true that she gave him a large, handsome chamber, with a fine marble floor; but scarcely a pane of glass was there in the windows that was not either smashed or cracked; the bed had but one coverlet, and the curtains were of the most transparent texture. It was the beginning of February, the cold was piercing, and no other wood was provided than some freshly-cut fagots of holly and juniper, to light which, the Duke had no resource but to burn all the straw of his *paillasse!* While, to crown all, on getting into this grand but miserable bed, he found the sheets so damp that he was obliged to dress himself again and sleep in his dressing-gown.

That M. Rosny should have left this unattractive abode very early next morning, we are not surprised to hear, and on escaping from the badly-provided establishment of Madame d'Aumale, he went on to Condé, where he was most cordially received by the household of M. d'Evreux, who prepared dinner for him, and in the meantime he got into bed, "pour se recompenser de la mauvaise nuictée d'Anêt, en attendant la venue de M. de Medarit, qui arriva sur le midy."

In 1593, Anêt was visited by Henri IV., then intent on besieging Dreux: he thence moved with his troops to Serisi, a small town close by, having a bridge across the Ure, and took up his quarters there; leaving De Rosny to collect arms and ammunition. Henry ordered Maréchal de Biron to attack the place, which was easily subdued, with the exception of the château, especially a massive tower called La Grise; upon which the king, hopeless of succeeding in taking it, held a consultation, and upon De Rosny's advice, they resolved to blow it up. The Duke, in his Memoirs, tells us, with great simplicity, how his idea was derided when, on repeatedly applying the powder, the ponderous edifice continued to resist; at length, however, the measure took effect, and to some purpose, for it exploded with a fearful crash, and a considerable number of men, women, and children fell victims to the disaster.

In the year 1740 Anêt became the property of the turbulent Duchesse du Maine, and *succursale* of Sceaux, when it was again the scene not only of political intrigues and factious *réunions*, but also of brilliant *fêtes* and literary assemblies. Another description of celebrity was, however, reserved for it, and having passed into the hands of the benevolent Duc de Penthièvre, it became the abode of charity and beneficence. Court beauties and obsequious seigneurs no longer trod its avenues, or fluttered about its *parterres;* but the sick, the

blind, the halt, and the maimed found a home within its venerable walls; and, as if to make amends for the equivocal character of its youth, its old age was consecrated to works of piety.

Abandoned by courtiers and worldlings, its precincts now for the first time served a noble purpose, and instead of the vanity and frivolity which had formerly characterised the charmed locality, its old halls and courts echoed with the blessings of the poor and the afflicted, who enjoyed its wide-spread hospitality.

Such are the historical titles of the Château of Anêt, and such its archæological pretensions: the reminiscences of its grandeur and the tale of its successive owners might have been transmitted to us by the edifice itself, but for that sworn enemy of palaces and leveller of châteaux—the Revolution, whose withering touch has left its black and scorching traces with fatal effect here. The Château Dianêt—that gem of the *Renaissance*, is a wreck! The only portion left entire was the portico, and that now has been carried away—a precious relic—to enrich the "Palais des Beaux Arts," at Paris. The demolition is utter and complete: "Ichabod" is written upon its fallen stones—the glory has departed!

MONTBAZON AND COUZIERS.

Situation of Montbazon; Approach; the Village; Gunpowder Manufactory Geological Products of the Vicinity—An Evening Stroll—Early History of Montbazon—Disputes of François, Duke of Brittany, with Louis XI.; conspires with the King of England against Louis—Landais the Tailor; the King's Discovery of the Plot; his Interview with Chauvin the Chancellor—Maurice Gourmel; his cruel Execution—Oath forced from the Duke—Louis's Superstitions—Cardinal de la Balue's Arrest; his Cage—Montbazon under Charles IX.—Louis de Rohan; Motto of the Family; his Descendant and Louis XIV.; Intrigue with Hortense Mancini—Anecdote of Cardinal Mazarin and the Chevalier de Rohan—Cardinal de Rohan, and the *Collier de la Reine*—Couziers; Interview there between Marie de Medicis and Louis XIII.; her Escape from Blois—Loyal and gallant Conduct of the Duc d'Epernon—The Duc de Luynes; his impolitic Course; its Result; his Unpopularity—Triumph of the Queen's Party; how brought about—The Bishop of Luçon, one "Richelieu" by Name; his Visit to Rome—Prediction of Pope Paul V.—Concini, Maréchal d'Ancre, Richelieu's Protector—Réné de Vignerol—Treaty between the Duc d'Epernon and Marie de Medicis; disadvantageous to the former—Interview between the King and Queen-mother; Formalities; unsatisfactory Results—Marie's Perplexity and Disappointment—Couziers; tragic Incidents in its Annals—De Rancé; his Intimacy with the Duchesse de Montbazon; abrupt Termination of their Relations; his horrified Surprise; its Effect on his subsequent Life—Passages given from contemporary Authors to prove that De Rancé preserved the Duchess's Head; similar Acts on the part of others—Bossuet's Letter—Chevalier de Bertin.

THE CHATEAUX DE MONTBAZON AND COUZIERS.

"Within that ruin where a shattered portal
Looks to the eastern stars, abandoned now
By men, to be the home of things immortal—
Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go,
And must inherit all he builds below
When he is gone:—a hall stood; o'er whose roof
Fair clinging weeds, with ivy pale did grow,
Clasping its grey rents with a verdurous woof,
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof."

SHELLEY.

A PLEASANT digression of a few miles from the direct road to Tours would take us from Loches to Montbazon and Couziers (Indre et Loire); we accordingly purposed visiting these localities. The day had been delightfully warm and bright, and the shades of a still summer's evening were falling as we approached our destination. As we ascended the valley of the Indre, we began to perceive on the left bank the towers of the massive old *château* crowning the summit of the hill on which it was built nine centuries back by powerful squatters, calling themselves Comtes d'Anjou. Between us and it was the picturesque old stone bridge, which we had yet to cross before arriving at the unobtrusive little town, with its antiquated streets and churches.

Montbazon is the *chef-lieu de canton*, and may contain its 1,200 inhabitants; but few visitors arrest their footsteps here, and the inn, though clean, and professing to lodge "à pied et

à cheval," did not offer very splendid accommodation. The town is straggling, but has a fine open market-place; still, it is a mere provincial town, retaining no trace of its former importance, and offering little interest beyond that imparted to it by the ruins in its vicinity.

In the outskirts we found a considerable gunpowder manufactory, which is looked upon as one of the most important and best organised in France; we were told that this "pouderie de Ripault," as it is called, manufactures annually upwards of 250,000 kilogrammes of powder. Saltpetre abounds here, and is produced from the quarries of tufa in the environs, which is converted almost entirely into that important ingredient. Articles of pottery are likewise manufactured here; but commerce is not lively, and the inhabitants seem to take life easily. At an early hour the place was in repose, so that when, after our evening meal, we sauntered out into the cool air, we had the place all to ourselves, and thoroughly enjoyed the calm stillness of that soft June night. The heavens were clear and star-lit, and the moon shone brightly, casting the broad shadows of the irregular old houses across the narrow, unlighted streets with broken outline upon the opposite tenements. The church-spire showed its well-defined point upon the deep-hued sky, while the dark *silhouette* of the castle stood prominently forth as the presiding genius of the place.

In this small, unknown provincial town, scarcely ever visited by a foreign face, out of the ken of the ordinary tourist, and inhabited by primitive people, evidently of the most unsophisticated character, we seemed at that dead hour of night to have withdrawn ourselves into a past age, and to be communing with the spirits of those who once held their feudal sway within these enduring old walls which they made so strong for their own selves.

The history of Montbazon is that of very distant times; it fell into decay in the sixteenth century, and—why, we cannot tell—was then abandoned to its fate, so that all the incidents we could collect relating to it are remote and obscure; they refer principally to the days of *châtelains* and their knightly successors, and, doubtless, included many a deadly combat, as well as many a splendid pageant.

Montbazon was built at the end of the tenth century by Foulkes Nerra, Comte d'Anjou; it was seized by Eudes II., Comte de Touraine, who, however, was not able to retain it. It passed thus from one feudal lord to another until 1204, when it became the property of the crown, but was seldom brought into use as a royal residence. In 1459 Charles VII., who was residing there, received the fealty of François II., Duke of Brittany; and again, in 1477, Montbazon was fixed upon as the place of meeting between Louis XI., King of France, and this same turbulent duke, on the following occasion.

François, whose continual disputes with the king had more or less troubled his reign, and that of his predecessor, and who was sorely puzzled how to deal with a prince in whom he had no confidence, apprehending the consequences of his continual aggressions, and himself ambitious of extending his power, secretly called on the King of England for assistance against Louis, holding out to him the inducement of again putting forward his own pretensions, and thus threatening the security of the throne of France. The medium of this clandestine correspondence was Landais, originally assistant to the tailor employed by the duke, and who, having had frequent occasions of attending upon that prince, had contrived to insinuate himself into his favour, and to win his confidence, so as to be consulted by him, even in political intrigues; and, in order to facilitate the part Landais had to play in the negotia-

tions with which he was intrusted, the duke appointed him "Maître de la Garde-robe" and "Grand Trésorier."

While this plot was approaching its culminating point of activity, the duke, whether to penetrate the designs of the king, or to put him off his guard, sent him a deputation, headed by several persons of importance, among whom was Chauvin, his chancellor.

No sooner had this embassy reached the frontiers of France than the king arrested all these persons, and had them put into different prisons. At the end of ten days he sent for Chauvin, and, addressing him, said: "Chancelier, can you guess why I have had you arrested?"

"It would be difficult," replied Chauvin, "for an innocent man to form any conjecture on such a subject; but I suppose that some false reports must have reached your Majesty respecting my master; if such be the case, I beseech you confide them to me, that I may at once satisfy you of their falsehood."

"Did you not assure me," said Louis, "that my nephew of Brittany had no communication with the King of England?"

"Yes, sire," replied Chauvin; "and I would answer for it on my head."

"That is a dangerous affirmation," answered the king; "and if I prove to you the contrary, what will you say then?"

"Sire, I will believe what I see, and no more."

Then the king drew from beneath his *robe de chambre* twenty-two original letters, twelve being those addressed by the duke to the King of England, and ten Edward's replies.

"Do you know that handwriting?" said the king, gravely.

The chancellor, terrified and astonished, protested he had had no knowledge of the affair, and threw himself upon the mercy of the king.

"Monsieur le Chancelier," said Louis, "tranquillise yourself.

I know that neither you nor your companions had any cognizance of this matter; and moreover, I believe that for anything in the world you would not have taken part in it. *Beau neveu* knows too well to take you into such counsel; there is only his *trésorier* and his *petit secrétaire*, Guengueu, who do that description of work for him. At all events, you see I did not arrest you without having something to tell you, about which there is no mistake. Go back now, you and your co-envoys, to *beau neveu* de Bretagne. Carry his letters back to him, and tell him to send me no more messages, under friendly pretences, until he has altogether broken with the King of England."

Chauvin being returned to his master's court with the alarming news, every one was puzzling his head to discover how the king had become possessed of these despatches; but there were few secrets in France that Louis did not manage to penetrate. François called for Landais, and interrogated him closely. The master of the robes pleaded that, his functions forbidding him to absent himself for so long a time, he had intrusted his mission to a youth named Maurice Gourmel, on whose fidelity he thought he could entirely rely, and that at this moment he was carrying the last packet to its destination. "Let him be pursued this instant," said the duke. "On your life, I charge you to bring him back." Gourmel was recalled; he confessed that he had suffered himself to be bribed by a spy of the king, residing at Cherbourg—a man wonderfully clever at imitating handwritings. He further admitted that this forger had paid him at the rate of a hundred crowns for each letter, keeping the originals in exchange for the copies, which were so well reproduced that neither in Brittany nor in England had the trick ever been discovered. Gourmel's treachery was cruelly punished, and his free confession procured him no indulgence. He was taken on the spot, sewed up in a sack, and thrown from a rock into the

sea: Landais meantime continued to justify himself and to retain the favour he enjoyed.

After this adventure, the duke, expecting at every instant to be attacked, raised troops, and convoked the *ban et arrière-ban* of his states; but the king was too busily engaged in the conquest of Artois to abandon it for the sake of a few towns in Brittany, which he would perhaps have been obliged subsequently to give up. He proposed to the duke certain conditions, and, drawing to a close his hostilities in Artois, was hastening to fulfil a vow he had sworn to accomplish at Notre Dame de Cléry, when the duke, who was anxious to arrive at a settlement of the terms on which peace was to be concluded between them, proposed that they should meet at Montbazon, and there he paid homage to Louis in the following form, drawn up by the king himself:—

"Quand le Roy serait en guerre, tant par terre que par mer, de le servir, secourir, et ayder de tout son pouvoir, envers et contre tous ceux qui peuvent vivre et mourir, sans personne quelconque excepter, à la défense de sa personne et de son royaume, et à la conservation des droits de la couronne de France."

A separate article was added, which dispensed the duke from personal service to the king in foreign war. Louis himself regulated the form of the oath, which might be taken on every species of relic, "excepté sur la croix de St. Lô d'Angers." Louis had a superstitious dread of desecrating this particular relic. It was inconvenient, therefore, to make oath before it, seeing that he was much less scrupulous as to performing what he promised on others.

In 1469, in the month of April, we read in the "Chronique Scandaleuse," Cardinal de la Balue was arrested, and carried, in the first instance, to Montbazon. In the following year he was removed thence; for in the account-books of André Briçonnet for the month of September, 1470, stands the following entry:

—"A Guyon de Broc, escuyer, Seigneur de Vas, maistre d'ostel du Roy, 60 livres pour faire cage de fer au Château Douzain pour y mettre le Cardinal d'Angers."

Historians have not been able to decide whether it was at Loches or at Plessis that the cardinal passed the remainder of his captivity, though the presumption is in favour of the former. Neither is the length of the term determined; Commines speaks of fourteen years, while Langlet affirms it to have been eleven.

The next historical record we meet with, in connection with this edifice, is the entry, dated 1569, of a document by which Charles IX., to reward the services of Louis VI. de Rohan, elevated his lands into a *principauté*, and adding to them those of Montbazon, gave him the title of Comte. Louis de Rohan was of the great De Rohan family, in whose veins flowed the old and royal blood of the Kings of France, and whose proud *devise* was—

"Roi ne puis,
Duc ne daigne,
Rohan je suis."

This branch was known as that of Rohan de Guéméné. Hercule de Rohan, son of Louis VI. de Rohan, was created Duc de Montbazon by Henri IV., and Louis VII., the second duke, was father to Louis VIII., Chevalier de Rohan, Grand-veneur de France, who succeeded in 1656 to his father's appointment. He was a great gamester, and, being one day at Cardinal Mazarin's, lost a considerable sum to the king. It had been agreed that the money should be paid in *louis d'or*, and after counting out eight hundred of these, the French coins began to run short, and he offered the remainder to Louis in Spanish pistoles, which the latter refused to accept. "Puisque votre majesté n'en veut pas," then said the chevalier, "elles ne sont bonnes à rien," and with that he threw them out of the window. Louis, taken aback at the suddenness of the repartee and the originality of

the action, complained of it to their common host. Mazarin contented himself with replying, "Sire, le Chevalier de Rohan a agi en roi, et votre majesté en Chevalier de Rohan."

The chevalier was amiable, brave, and generous, and he followed Louis XIV. to the campaign of Flanders, in 1667. Besides this, he was fascinating and gallant where the fair sex was concerned, and his adventure with Hortense Mancini, niece of the Cardinal, was one cause of his ultimate disgrace. Their intrigue was discovered by an intercepted love-letter addressed to him by the lady, and Mazarin visited the offence with great severity. The part taken by the chevalier in the conspiracy formed by La Truaumont was the ostensible reason for his arrest and condemnation. He was sentenced to be beheaded, and entertained some hope that his execution would be a private one within the Bastille; but P. Bourdaloue, who attended him in his last hours, informed him that he must make up his mind to a public penance. His conduct was marked by the most pious resignation, and he replied with true Christian philosophy, "Tant mieux, nous en aurons plus d'humiliation." The event was fixed for November 27th, 1674; and on the morning of its accomplishment, the executioner having asked him if he would wish a silken ribbon to tie his hands, he answered, "Jésus-Christ a été lié avec des cordes; je ne demande pas d'autres liens."

The chevalier was very popular, and many wished to petition for his pardon, but no one dared. Louis himself was desirous to remit his punishment, and expressed himself to that effect as he came out of the theatre on the previous night; but he considered it necessary to make a public example, and the Chevalier de Rohan accordingly perished on the scaffold.

The famous Cardinal de Rohan, who was implicated in the affair of the "*Collier de la Reine*," in Louis XVI.'s reign, was a descendant of the Montbazon family.

At a short distance from Montbazon, we found still existing the not less interesting Château de Couziers, or Courcières, which has been since the sixteenth century inherited by the Seigneurs de Montbazon, all more or less illustrious and distinguished.

This château, although occasionally the residence of the Court of France, is not often mentioned in history. Nevertheless, we find the record of a remarkable interview which took place there, on the 5th September, 1619, between the Regent, Marie de Medicis, and her son, Louis XIII., which resulted in the treaty of Angoulême, and the temporary reconciliation of Louis and his mother. Marie had placed herself under the safeguard of one of her most faithful adherents, the Duc d'Epernon, then governor of the Château de Loches. Marie was at this time a prisoner in the Château de Blois, and having contrived with one faithful and attached domestic to escape by the dangerous and not very dignified expedient of being let down from a window, had reached Loches in safety. The duke, however, not considering his royal *protégée* safer in one of the king's castles than in another, carried her to Angoulême, where the château was not only his own property, but was vigorously defended.

Meantime the Duc de Luynes, who was consulted by the king as to what were the best measures to adopt in a matter of so much danger on the one hand, and of so much delicacy on the other, had given the most stringent counsels to the monarch. Regardless of the relationship between the royal disputants, he was for sending troops to Angoulême, investing the castle, seizing the queen by force, and either punishing or pardoning her defenders according to the king's pleasure. Louis's filial feeling revolted against this mode of proceeding, and he at once negatived the proposal, on which De Luynes suggested

that the basis of the negotiation should be the surrender of the Duc d'Épernon by the queen, in order that he might be dealt with as a traitor to the king, and made an example of.

This proposal was made to the queen, who indignantly rejected it; and so far from consenting to abandon a man who had risked everything to rescue her from captivity, she declared she would throw the whole strength of her party between him and whomsoever should venture to attack him. D'Epernon on his side produced, as a sufficient authorisation of his act, an autograph letter from the king to his mother, in which he had granted her full liberty to retire to any spot she pleased within the kingdom. This document had been enclosed within another addressed to him by the queen, in which she besought him to favour her evasion, and to receive her within his province; "and," added he, "I did not consider myself justified in refusing the petition of the mother of my king, supported by so authentic a permission."

Luynes was not to be baffled by this argument, but continued to press D'Epernon, and actually ordered the troops in the direction of Angoulême. They committed hostilities on a small town in Limousin, which resisted and was pillaged. On this, the court, the townspeople, the provinces were up in arms; a universal cry arose on all sides against this war, which was regarded by the people as iniquitous in principle, and dishonourable on the part of the king. "Is a queen to be blamed," said they, "for escaping from a prison, and for desiring to see her son? Can anything be more unjust than to refuse her this favour? Has she not reason to complain that the promises made to her have not been kept? And even were she altogether in the wrong, is it decent for a son to be thus pursuing his mother with an armed force? Such a war could not possibly end happily; it is revolting to nature and to religion, and the

soldiers themselves are reluctant to serve in such a cause." Such were the comments of the country—

"Secreta hæc murmura vulgi."

The preachers took up the cause in like manner, and, surrounded as the king was, the tone of public opinion at length reached him. De Luynes was a favourite at court, but he was not loved by the nation; and those even who were opposed to D'Epernon would not have had him ruined if De Luynes was to be the gainer thereby.

De Luynes lost no opportunity and shrank from no meanness to obtain the disgrace of D'Epernon; he even condescended to bribe Marie de Medicis' confidential servants, to induce them to pour into her ear the sentiments with which he wished to inspire her. Ruccelai himself, who had had a fresh quarrel with the duke, did all he could to induce her to abandon him, and thus make her peace with the king. But just as D'Epernon's enemies were flattering themselves they were succeeding in their treacherous projects, and D'Epernon himself was beginning to apprehend signs of vacillation in his royal guest,—in short, at the very moment when matters seemed most desperate on all sides, the unlooked-for presence of one single man sufficed to turn the whole current of affairs, and to restore that very peace which but now seemed more hopeless than ever.

It was at this juncture that Richelieu, then unknown to fame, a man of noble family, but simply bishop of an unimportant see, stepped in, and, by a chance most fortunate for himself, found himself on the first round of that ladder by which he ultimately mounted to a then almost unheard-of pre-eminence. Richelieu, at this time no more than the obscure Bishop of Luçon, was wasting his life in discontented inactivity at Avignon,

where Pope Paul V. only tolerated his presence. He had been presented to that pontiff in Rome, and had there practised on him a petty trick, which had the effect of revealing his true character, and of exciting the Holy Father's mistrust of him. At the close of the audience Paul remarked to those about him, with prophetic sapience,—"Ce jeune evêque ne manque pas d'esprit, mais un jour ce sera un grand fourbe."

Richelieu had contrived to appear at the Court of France under the auspices of his protector and friend Concini, Maréchal d'Ancre; but on his disgrace, and subsequent assassination, the Bishop of Luçon had deemed it prudent to withdraw from public notice, and was now only watching a favourable opportunity to take a leading position in the queen's party. That opportunity had just presented itself, and Richelieu, by the exercise of consummate prudence and tact, succeeded in bringing about, if not a cordial, at least an apparently friendly understanding between the king and the queen-mother, thus laying the foundation-stone of his subsequent greatness. He offered his services to Marie de Medicis through the intermediation of Réné de Vignerol, Seigneur de Pont Courlai, his brother-in-law: they were accepted, and he was ordered to present himself before the queen.

Déogeant gives us to understand in his Memoirs (vol. iv. p. 395) that Richelieu was in collusion with the court, but that the queen was ignorant of it; in fact, he conducted himself with all the circumspection of a finished diplomatist, listened modestly to the opinions of others, and then with calmness and dignity pronounced his own. The terms of reconciliation were drawn up, and if the queen did not obtain all she had stipulated for, the result was far beyond what she could have hoped after her sequestration at Blois. The king gave her the government of Anjou, with the *droits régaliens*, and the towns

of Angers, Chinon, and Pont-de-Cé as a place of safety, with 400 foot soldiers and two companies of cavalry, paid by the state. Her revenue and the scale of her household were considerably augmented, and, in fine, she received permission to join the king, on condition that if this treaty were not accepted, their meeting should only be regarded as a simple interview; in fact, that it was to be "without prejudice."

The Duc d'Epernon came off worst in this arrangement, and had good reason to rue the day *he* had put his trust in princes. By a refinement of mockery the king's pardon was accorded to him—a humiliation doubly mortifying to a man of his lineage and spirit—and he lost about 250,000 crowns. But then he had the satisfaction of serving a queen, and he received, in compensation, her august thanks and a diamond ring which had been worn on one of her royal fingers!

The amicable interview between the queen-mother and her son, which was to follow these preliminaries, was then arranged to take place at the Château de Couziers, on the 5th of September, 1619. The queen was to arrive first, and the Duc de Luynes was sent forward on the 4th to be at the château in readiness to receive her Majesty next day. Richelieu preceded the queen, who, on her arrival, met the Duc de Luynes with the greatest apparent cordiality, while Richelieu was thanked by the king for the part he had taken in the reconciliation. At length the royal personages were introduced, with considerable ceremony, into each other's presence. Matthieu fils (p. 102 of his Memoirs) describes them as manifesting more surprise than tenderness. "The king," he says, "was at this time seventeen years of age."

"Monsieur mon fils," said Marie, "que vous vous estes faict grand depuis que je ne vous ai vu!"—alluding not so much, perhaps, to his physical growth as to the decided part he had

taken in the tragic fate of the Maréchal d'Ancre, which still rankled in the queen's mind.

"Je n'ai grandi, madame," replied Louis, "que pour vôtre service."

What was there to be expected from a meeting between a mother and son which began with this polite sparring? Three days they passed together, that is to say, under the same roof; for the king avoided all occasions of being alone with his mother. He hunted almost incessantly during that time, and seemed absorbed in the festivities of the court. Marie was, however, overwhelmed with the caresses and attentions of her other children and of her step-daughter, together with the respectful homage of all the lords and ladies of the court. Nevertheless, she would have preferred the good-will of her son to all this.

"Comment," said she one day to the Prince de Piedmont, her son-in-law, "comment m'y prendrai-je pour obtenir les bonnes grâces du Roi?"

"Aimez véritablement et sincèrement tout ce qu'il aime; ces deux mots contiennent la loi et les prophètes," was the reply.

The lesson was a salutary one, and had Marie learned it earlier, or practised; after she did learn it, she might have spared herself much of the misery of her life. A modern inscription on a tablet of white marble recalls this incident of the early years of the reign of Louis XIII.

About the middle of the seventeenth century the Château de Couziers was the scene of a dramatic event which occasioned the foundation, or more properly speaking, the reformation, of the order of La Trappe.

Armand Bouthilier de Rancé was nephew of Claude Bouthilier de Chavigni, secretary of state, and superintendent of finances, and also godson of Cardinal de Richelieu, as well as Chanoine

of Notre Dame de Paris. He was a man of brilliant conversation and attractive manners, and had long entertained a secret passion for the Duchesse de Montbazon; the duchess, less virtuous, it would seem, than her ancestress, who, as we have seen, refused to be mistress even to a king, returned his criminal affection, and went so far as to give him the key to a private staircase which communicated with her apartments. Thus provided, his clandestine visits were carried on, without discovery, for a long period. It happened that De Rancé was obliged to absent himself for some time; but, returning unexpectedly to Couziers, he availed himself of the private entrance, intending to cause the beautiful duchess an agreeable surprise. On entering the well-known *boudoir*, where he was accustomed to be received with a smile of welcome, a frightful spectacle presented itself. De Rancé stood aghast, thinking himself the sport of some horrid vision. The room was hung with black, and the windows were darkened; it was lighted by six tall tapers in long candlesticks standing on the ground, in the midst of which stood a black coffin, open, and displaying the inanimate and shrouded corpse of his beloved mistress. Beside the coffin, near which not even a servant had been left to watch, he discerned, with horror, on a silver dish, the once beautiful head that had so often lain upon his shoulder, with beaming eyes upturned to his. Why it had been severed from the body, the historians, who relate the singular fact, are not agreed; some affirming that it had been the result of a *post-mortem* surgical operation; others that the leaden coffin had been found too short; Saint-Simon inclines to the former opinion. Whatever the cause, however, there is reason to believe that De Rancé afterwards obtained possession of the decapitated member, and preserved it as a precious relic. We can scarcely understand the morbid feeling that would prompt such a proceeding; but it appears not to

have been altogether strange in those times, for Pierre de l'Estoile tells us that Marguerite de Valois and the Duchesse de Nemours thus retained, respectively, the dissevered heads of La Mole and Coconnas, who lost their lives during the fury of the Huguenot conspiracies and Catholic retributions: the chronicler recounts how these ladies cherished the precious souvenirs of their lovers, "*et les gardèrent parmi les marques de leur amour.*"

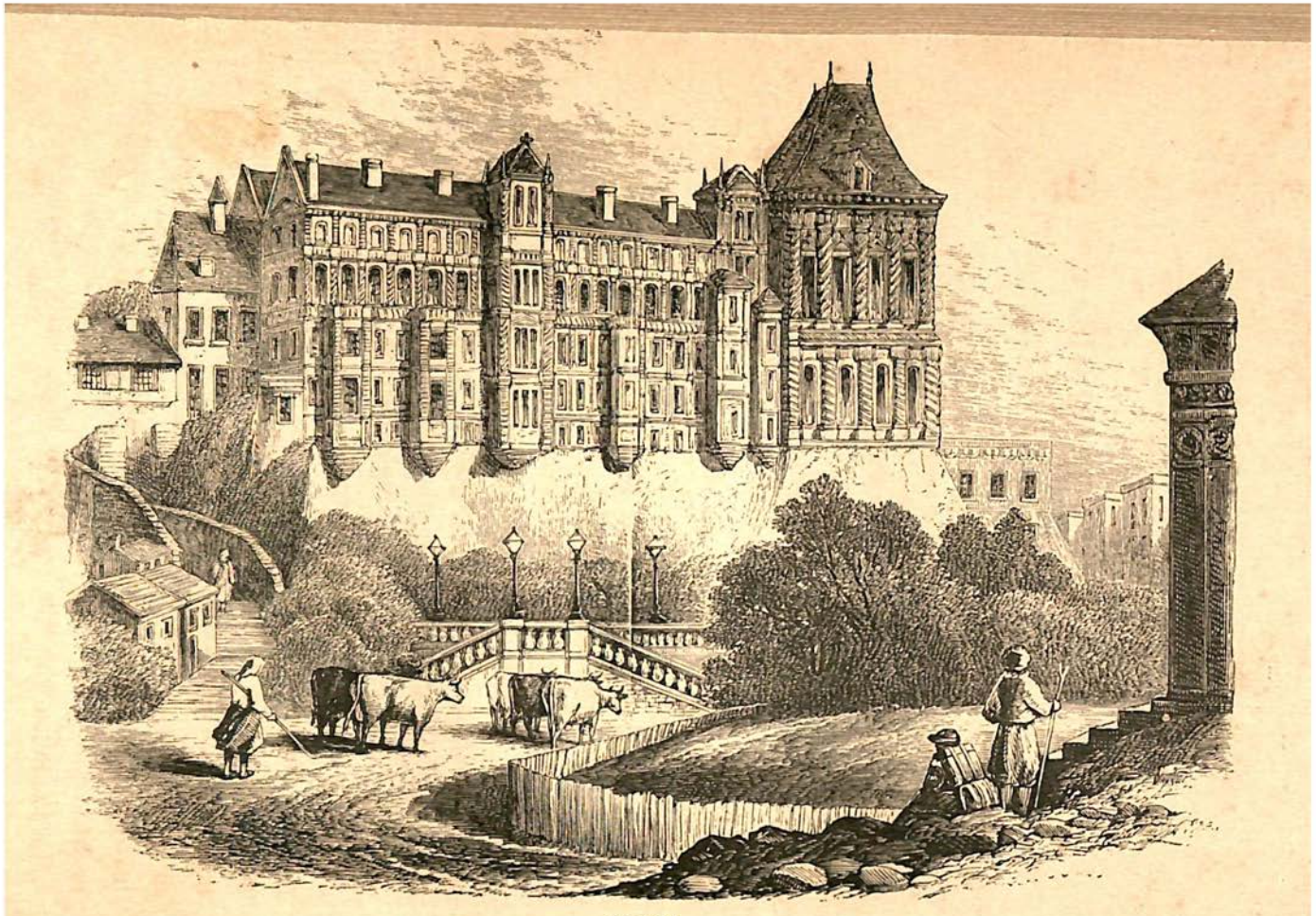
It is believed that the impression produced on the mind of De Rancé by this dreadful sight had the effect of disgusting him with the world, and bringing to his mind a practical conviction of the vanity of all things earthly. In consequence of this, he renounced secular life, and retired to the abbey of La Trappe, becoming the founder of the reformed rule of that severe order.

Bossuet appears to allude to the incident of the head in the following passage, addressed to De Rancé, when transmitting to him the funeral orations on the Queen of England and Madame Henriette:—"J'ai donné ordre," says he, "de vous faire passer deux oraisons funèbres, qui parce qu'elles font voir le néant du monde, peuvent avoir place parmi les livres d'un solitaire, et qu'en tout cas, il peut les regarder comme deux *têtes de mort* assez touchantes." If Bossuet did mean this, it was rather a ghastly joke!

In the "Travels of the Chevalier de Bertin" occurs a passage, which testifies to the general belief respecting this matter, in his time:—"Nous voici," he writes, "à Anêt: la petite statuette de Madame Diane de Poitiers, en pied, n'est point, sans doute, aussi intéressante que la *tête* de la Duchesse de Montbazon, apportée à La Trappe par l'Abbé de Rancé, et conservée dans sa chambre par ses successeurs."

BLOIS.

Early Description of Blois by Frère Noël Mars; later by La Fontaine; Eventfulness of its Annals; Origin of the Name; early History; sold to the reigning Family in 1391—Louis d'Orléans—Royal Library of Five Volumes—Charles VI.—Isabeau de Bavière—Valentine de Milan; Murder of her Husband, Charles d'Orléans; her Desire to avenge him—Dunois, Bastard of Orleans—Valentine's Death-bed—Charles, Comte de Blois, seeks the Alliance of the English to carry out his Mother's Wishes; Results of this Policy—Battle of Agincourt—Charles de Blois taken Prisoner—Joan of Arc—Charles d'Orléans liberated after Twenty-five Years of Captivity; his Son by Marie de Clèves; afterwards Louis XII.—Charles d'Orléans' Love of Letters; his Poetry—News brought to Louis XII. of the Death of Charles VIII.; his Accession to the Throne; his wise Government; his Improvements at Blois; his Illness; devoted Affection of the People; Death of his Queen, Anne of Brittany; his re-Marriage and Death—Machiavelli—François I.; his Disputes with Charles Quint—Claude de France; resides at Blois during the King's Captivity; her Death—A dark Page in the History of the Castle—The Guises—Henri III.—The King's Pastimes; his weak Character—Dissatisfaction of the People—The Duke of Guise's Popularity—The King's treacherous Conduct; the Cause of his Hatred of the Cardinal; Details of the Duke's Assassination; followed by that of the Cardinal—Cowardice and Cruelty of Henri—Last Illness and Death of Catherine de Medicis—Death of Henri III.—Marie de Medicis imprisoned at Blois; escapes to Loches—The Duc d'Epernon—Gaston d'Orléans exiled to Blois; his Additions to the Building—Mansard—Death of Gaston—Blois under Henri IV.; ceases to be a royal Residence—Banquet given by Louis XIV.—The Castle made to serve as a Barrack; how treated at the Revolution—Statue of Louis XII.; its Fate—Present Condition of the Castle.



BLOIS.

THE CASTLE OF BLOIS.

"And thou wilt track them—wilt, from rooms of state
Where kings have feasted, and the festal song
Rung through the fretted roof, cedar and gold,
Step into darkness; and be told, 'Twas here,
Trusting, deceived, invited but to die,
Carrara and his valiant sons were slain.'"

ROGERS.

If we are to be guided by the testimony of tourists and travellers of all times, we are bound to believe that Blois has always been what we ourselves found it, one of the most picturesque and attractive towns in France.

A Benedictine monk—Frère Noël Mars, of Orleans, who visited it in 1646—left so flattering a description of this old "Cité aux Roys," that his MS. has been preserved in the library of that town. He begins with the sky, which he says is serene and temperate, and to this he adds that the soil is fertile, producing all the choicest gifts, whether of Bacchus or Ceres; while abundant streams run through verdant plains, and the warmth of the sun is tempered by the cool shade of extensive forests. He sums up this glowing account by affirming that Blois, situated on the crystalline waters of the majestic Loire, built on different gradients, and therefore most picturesque in aspect, surrounded by historical châteaux and noblemen's hereditary seats, combines all that can be desired in nature or art.

La Fontaine, who was at Blois in 1663, partly confirms this

impression, and declares that it would be difficult to find a more smiling and attractive spot.

The history of Blois is interesting and eventful, so much so that we can only touch upon the numerous incidents, whether of war, love, chivalry, crime, pageant, or art, which have illustrated the annals of its old grey stones.

Its origin is merged in the mist of the obscure ages, but its name is derived from *bleiz*, which, in the language of the Carnute (also that of the Celtic tribes), signifies a wolf, and that animal has been adopted as the emblem of the city.

Subsequently a Roman settlement was formed there; and at one time gold coins were often disinterred at Blois, bearing on one side the inscription, "*Bleso Castro*," surrounding a crowned head, and on the other a cross.

Gregory of Tours mentions the Counts of Blois as early as the year 584, but the first who made himself in any way remarkable was William of Blois, who died in 854, at the time there was a dispute between Louis le Débonnaire and his son Lothaire.

Eudes succeeded him, and the territory of Blois remained in the hands of the counts, who took the name, until 924, when it came into the hands of Thibault le Tricheur, Comte de Champagne. Thibault was a fierce and powerful baron, who kept all the country in alarm by his rapacious disposition while he lived, and by his reputation of black and midnight huntsman after his death.

Three dynasties of these puissant Counts of Blois succeeded each other, and during the last, history records the death of Louis, Comte de Blois, at the battle of Crécy. His brother, the famous Charles de Châtelet, competitor for the Duchy of Brittany with Simon de Montfort, was killed at the battle of Auray in 1364.

In 1387 Count Guy had with him as chaplain the illustrious Froissart, when he received at the castle Jeanne d'Armagnac, Duchesse de Berri, and her sister-in-law, Catherine de France.

In the following year the celebrated chronicler, an eye-witness to the event, supplies an interesting account of the reception of the Dukes of Brittany, of Burgundy, and of Berri, at the Château de Blois, which he describes in his naïve language as "bel, grand, fort et plantureuse, et un des beaux royaumes de France."

In 1391 Louis de Châtillon, only son of Guy, dying without issue, Count Guy, already old and ruined with debts, sold his domains to Louis d'Orléans for the sum of 200,000 gold crowns.

In 1394, on the death of Guy, Louis d'Orléans took possession of his territory, and became the chief of the fourth dynasty of the Counts of Blois. To commemorate this occasion a large banner of azure with gold fleurs-de-lys—painted in oil by John Bersigan, painter of Blois—was seen waving before the castle gates. Louis began collecting the library of the Château de Blois, which consisted at first of five volumes given by the king, Charles V., his father. These were two Bibles, a Missal, a book entitled the "Government of Kings," and the "Travels of the Venetian, Marco Polo." It does not appear whether their owner kept a librarian! Blois was inhabited for a time by the court of Charles VI., when the terrible Isabeau de Bavière, surnamed "La Louve de France," was its queen.

After the Duke of Orleans, brother of Charles VI., had been treacherously and barbarously assassinated in 1407 by order of John, Duke of Burgundy, Valentine Visconti, Duchess of Milan, his inconsolable widow, one of the most beautiful and accomplished women of her time, retired to the Château de

Blois, where she gave herself up to grief and thoughts of vengeance. She took for her emblem a watering-pot between two S's, initials of *soupir* and *souci*, with the motto:—

"Rien ne m'est plus,
Plus ne m'est rien."

"Valentine died at the early age of thirty-six, on the 4th of December of the following year," as says Juvenal des Ursins, "of sorrow and disappointment, after calling her children round her bed, and making them swear to avenge their father's death." Among these was Jean, Bastard of Orleans, whom she loved and treated as one of her own children; and on his coming forward—for he was but seven years old—and assuring her of his readiness to fight the Duke of Burgundy, she burst into tears, and clasping the boy to her heart, she said, "Il devait être à moi; on me l'a volé." This child, who never lost sight of his promise, and kept his word bravely, afterwards became the "brave et beau Dunois," and was subsequently made Duc de Longueville.

In 1415, Charles d'Orléans, Comte de Blois, in his eagerness to avenge his father's cruel death, called the English to his aid. The troubles occasioned to the country by this rash step culminated in the battle of Agincourt, where the Comte was taken prisoner. The château had at that time become formidable, Blois being the frontier town of the kingdom of Bourges, to which the English had reduced King Charles VII.

In the month of April, 1429, Joan of Arc made her solemn entry into Blois, and left it on the 28th at the head of six thousand men, among whom were the Maréchal de Beaupré, Admiral de Culant, the Sire de Gaucour, La Hire, and Xaintrailles. The Pucelle was armed, and dressed entirely in white, and was mounted *à califourchon* on a large black horse.

In 1431 the Bastard of Orleans, the first warrior of his times,

took the command of the Château de Blois, and received two hundred livres a year as stipend.

After twenty-five years of captivity, in 1440, Charles d'Orléans being restored to liberty, returned to the Château de Blois, where he gave himself up to his taste for poetry. Some of the effusions he has left are full of grace and beauty, and afford evidences of refined taste: we cite one asserted by M. de la Saussaye, the historian of the Château de Blois, to have been inspired by the locality:—

"ODE AU PRINTEMS.

I.

"Le tems a laissié son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye,
Et s'est vestu de broderye
De soleil rayant, cler et beau.

II.

"Il n'y a beste, ne oiseau,
Qui en son jargon ne chante ou crye:
Le tems a laissié son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye.

III.

"Rivière, fontaine et ruisseau
Portent, en livrée jolie,
Gouttes d'argent, d'orfèverie;
Chacun s'habille de nouveau,
Le vent a laissié son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye."

Twenty years later, on the 27th of June, 1462, Marie de Clèves, third wife of this prince, gave birth, at the Château de Blois, to a son, destined to become afterwards Louis XII., under the glorious title of "*Père du Peuple.*"

It was during the night of the 7th April, 1498, that messengers arrived in hot haste at the Château de Blois, to announce to this child, now a man, and in his turn Duke of Orleans, the unexpected death of King Charles VIII.—"Le Roi est mort!

Vive le Roi!"—exclaimed the heralds, and France scarcely knew she had changed kings!

The prince received, we are told, with calm dignity the intelligence of an event which rendered him monarch of France, and no sooner ascended the throne than he won all hearts by the wisdom of his administration; his "*Ordonnance de Blois*" would alone suffice to attach an endearing recollection to the spot whence it was issued. If an imperfect code, it was still a bold, a benevolent, and a sagacious attempt to redress existing abuses, and its sixty-two articles touch almost every branch of government.

Louis XII. took great delight in Blois as a residence, and always returned thither with renewed pleasure. We have records of edicts and treaties of peace signed there, of receptions of ambassadors, and interviews with princes.

In 1501 the king was attacked, while at Blois, with a serious illness. The circumstance was so far important that it elicited the affectionate estimation in which he was held by the people, who prayed for his preservation, says the chronicler, "comme s'il eust été père d'un chascun."

It was during the convalescence that followed, that Louis completed the works he had planned at Blois. It would be impossible to imagine anything more exquisite. The remains that have survived to our days, notwithstanding the frightful mutilations they have undergone, still excite the admiration and delight of connoisseurs.

On the 9th of January, 1514, Queen Anne de Bretagne expired at Blois. Louis mourned her sincerely, and, after having her interred with great pomp, himself quitted Blois never to return thither. He only survived her two years; though, in the interval, he remarried as his third wife a princess of England.

In 1510 Blois was visited by a man almost as celebrated in his own times as he has been since—a man whose name has created a new term in the language of politicians—Machiavelli, at that time ambassador of the Florentine Republic, allied to the King of France: Machiavelli, on whose life and character opinions are so various that posterity knows not what to believe of them. It is, at all events, pleasanter to think of him as one of the lights of the world—

> "Entering his closet, and among his books,
> Among the great of every age and clime—
> A numerous court—turning to whom he pleased,
> Questioning each, why he did this or that,
> And learning how to overcome the fear
> Of poverty and death."

François I. was now on the throne, about to enter on his famous contest with Charles Quint. He left to Claude, his wife, the administration of the Comté de Blois; and it was at the Château de Blois that was collected the sum stipulated for, as the ransom of the king from his captivity at Madrid.

François, always roving and changeable in his tastes, had no great liking for Blois. He never paid it more than a few passing visits, and finally abandoned it under the same circumstances as his predecessor, but not for the same reasons. His amiable and virtuous queen, Claude, ended her brief and tranquil life within the château, at the early age of twenty-five. This princess had inherited the simple tastes of her father, Louis XII.; and perhaps a less suitable companion than the volatile François could scarcely have been selected for her. The match was a politic one only as far as the nation was concerned; but alas! for royalty, that is often the sole consideration. The king soon forgot his gentle wife, though, to do him justice, he was tenderly attached to the numerous progeny she bore him.

The Comté de Blois ceased to be a separate sovereignty under

Henri II., by whom it was merged into the crown of France in 1547.*

We now enter into the most sinister portion of the history of the old Château de Blois—that which concerns the Guises, those masters of the League. Those hoary old walls, the witnesses of so many dynasties, now sheltered the machinators of plots, duels, and assassinations: it is enough to say, we have arrived at the time of Catherine de Medicis, Charles IX., and Henri III.—of Coligny, and the "grand Balafré."

During that singular and characteristic period, when gallantry formed a distraction between murder and war, Henri III., whose character must have been a strange compound of frivolity and savagery, instituted as a diversion such dramatic entertainments as the times afforded, and sent for the first Italian comic performers who had then appeared, to Blois. They arrived at the castle from Venice in February, 1577, and gave their representations in the *Salle des Etats*, under the name of *I Gelosi*. So far, so well, but Pierre de l'Estoile, that quaint old chronicler, relates that Henri III. was often seen at these performances, "dressed as a woman, with an open pourpoint displaying his throat, round which he wore a pearl necklace and three linen collars, two with frills and one turned over, as seen upon the ladies of the court." The parliament of 1576 winked at the general folly of the court, but it was followed by that of 1588. This last, made of the edict of the Union a law of the state, and called the Duke of Guise to the supreme power. The king, alarmed at this step, made promises of reform. He also affected a reconciliation with the Guises, and to support appearances, communicated at the same altar with the duke. The king undertook entirely to forget the past, while the duke swore to be thenceforward submissive and faithful to the interests of his sovereign: from that moment his death was decreed.

The destruction of the Balafré's brother, the Cardinal de Guise, was determined on at the same time. Besides his popularity, and the reaction that would probably occur in his favour after the "removal" of the duke, Henri had a personal pique against this prelate. He had never forgiven him an epigram he found he had made upon his *devise*, consisting of two crowns, with a place left for the third, and the motto, MANET ULTIMA CÆLO, the two present being those of France and of Poland, where he had reigned for a short time. The epigram was contained in the following cutting distich :—

"Qui dederas binas, unam abstulit, altera nutat ;
Tertia tonsoris, nunc facienda, manu."

The cardinal added that he should have much pleasure in holding the royal head while the barber of the Capuchins shaved upon it this monastic crown.

It was in the month of December, of the memorable year 1588: the approach of Christmas had increased the practical devotions of the king, who seemed entirely absorbed in the performance of the prescribed rites of religion. He had announced that he should go on Friday, the 23rd, to Notre Dame de Cléry, as a pilgrimage; but even at that time his heart was full of designs against the duke's life, and of thoughts as to the best mode of taking it. However, the Duc de Guise, the Cardinal his brother, the Archbishop of Lyons, and some other seigneurs, had been informed that the king expected them at six o'clock in the morning in his cabinet, to despatch some pressing matters previous to his departure.

At four o'clock, Du Halde, first *valet de chambre*, awoke the king according to his Majesty's commands. Henri had not slept: he rose and passed into his cabinet, where Bellegarde and Du Halde had already arrived. Loignac, who had accepted the treacherous office rejected by Crillon, was in attendance,

followed by nine of the "*quarante-cinq.*" The remainder were concealed in cells prepared in the roof. At length, the members of the council having arrived, the king called to the *quarante-cinq* to come down by a private staircase, cut in the thickness of the wall, which led to his room. They had been tempted by a large bribe to avenge the king, and were eager to earn it.

The Duc de Guise was not without warning. On the previous evening he had found a note in his napkin at supper, containing these words: "Be on your guard; a plot is brooding against you." This, and other similar hints, he had despised, contenting himself with replying, "*They would not dare!*" and with this he had thrown the note under the table, and given no further heed to its purport. At three in the morning he had quitted the beautiful Charlotte de Sauve, Marquise de Noirmoustiers, his mistress, and it was near eight when his servants called him: le Balafré dressed hastily and went out: the rain was falling in torrents. "Heaven," says Pasquier, "was weeping over the crime so soon about to be perpetrated."

Hardly had the duke crossed the threshold of the castle when Crillon ordered all the issues to be closed. Pericard, the duke's secretary, alarmed at these precautions, and at sight of an unusual number of guards, who watched all the approaches, sent to his master, in a pocket-handkerchief, a note, in which was written, "Monseigneur, lose no time in escaping, or you are lost." But this message never reached him. The page who carried it was denied access to the duke; but M. de Saint-Prix, the king's valet, thinking he wanted a handkerchief, fetched him one of his master's. There were assembled in the council-chamber, when the duke entered, Cardinals Gondy and de Vendôme, Marshals de Retz and d'Aumont, Cardinals

de Guise and de Rambouillet, MM. de Marillac and Petrémal Marcel, intendant of finances, and Fontenoy, treasurer.

Soon after, the Archbishop of Lyons entered. Le Balafré sat down near the fire, complained of the cold, and ate some Brignolle plums offered to him by M. de Saint-Prix, first *valet de chambre* of the king. The members of the council now took their places, to listen to the report of Petrémal on the salt-tax, when Reval came and begged the duke to step into the king's cabinet, where his Majesty wished to speak to him. The duke put a few plums into his lozenge-box, rose, saluted the assembly with his wonted grace, and went out. Nambre, the usher, shut the door behind him; and Guise, meeting the "*quarante-cinq*," saluted them, and passed on: here he remarked that he was followed, and for the first time suspecting all was not right, he paused while raising the tapestry, but eventually he turned round, "holding his beard with his right hand," as if undecided how to act. Meantime, one of the murderers, Saint-Malines by name, seized him by the arm, and at the same moment struck him a blow in the throat with his poignard. "A moi, mes amis!" cried Guise; "trahison!" But it was too late! Another held him fast by the legs, hanging his weight upon him; and a third coming behind, gave him a violent blow on the back of his head. Strong and active as the duke was, his resistance took them by surprise. He stunned one of his assailants by a blow from the *drageoir* he held in his hand, and dragged his murderers from one end of the room to the other. But this could not go on, the duke was alone against all these ruffians, and at length a push from Loignac sent him to the foot of the king's couch, where, exhausted by loss of blood, he fell, exclaiming, "Mon Dieu! Miséricorde!"

The king, who had listened with perfect composure, behind

the tapestry which masked the doorway, to these sanguinary details, hearing his rival fall, lifted the drapery and looked upon the scene. The fine and powerful form of the duke, but now in all its vigour, lay extended there, bleeding and without movement, a pitiable sight, but it failed to move the narrow, callous heart of Henri. "How big he was!" was the king's sole but suggestive exclamation, as he kicked the head on one side in order to pass. Beaulieu, upon Henri's order, approached the motionless body, to see if the heart still beat, but fell back in alarm as the duke at that moment gave a loud expiring groan. It was the last, and Henri de Valois had now nothing more to fear from Henri de Guise!

An old carpet was thrown over the corpse, which was kicked on one side, as it lay across the doorway; and one of the lords having made a cross of some straw that happened to be there, whether in derision, or because any other demonstration of the kind was not possible, placed it on the extemporised and ignoble pall. Henri, who, now the deed was done, began to be alarmed for the consequences, went immediately to his mother, whose sagacity was generally equal to the occasion. She was then on her death-bed, but listened eagerly to the news.

"It is one thing to cut," said she; "the question is, when that is done, how to sew."

But this was not all; the next morning, at eight o'clock, the Cardinal de Lorraine, the duke's brother, who had been detained in a tower within the château, and was unconscious of his brother's murder, was assassinated by the soldiers of Duguast, captain of the guards—seized, gagged, and tied hand and foot, he was dragged into a dark vault, and there despatched with halberds. The corpses of the two brothers were then reduced to ashes and scattered to the winds, lest any of the faction

should secure and preserve anything belonging to them that could be deemed a relic: and thus ended this fearful drama; but its consequences were yet to be felt.

In what repute, indeed, could royalty be held when, in order to obtain justice against an offending subject, a king of France must condescend to play the part of an assassin and a conspirator?

Retributive justice was not long in following these atrocities. Twelve days after this sanguinary crime, Catherine de Medicis expired beneath the same roof, in the ravings of delirium, and within the space of eight months, the king himself fell—in his turn—also, by the hand of an assassin. France was delivered from this weak and cruel monarch on the 2nd August, 1589.

After these tragic occurrences, and during the reign of Louis XIII., or rather, we should say, of Richelieu, Blois became the prison of the queen-mother, Marie de Medicis, who escaped thence to Loches, favoured by the Duc d'Epernon, then governor of that castle. The window is still shown by which she succeeded in evading the vigilance of her gaolers. She carried with her only a small casket of jewels, and was attended in her flight by one faithful maid-servant.

Subsequently to this, Gaston d'Orléans was sequestrated at Blois, and during his enforced occupation of the castle, he amused himself in designing, with the aid of Mansard—the Bernini of French architects—the west façade. Persons of taste will be disposed to think that they might have been better employed. This prince departed this life at the Château de Blois on the 2nd February, 1660, in a resigned, repentant, and pious condition of mind, at the age of fifty-two, leaving an only daughter—La Grande Mademoiselle.

On the accession of Louis XIII. to the throne, the Castle of

Blois had already lost its importance as a royal residence; it recovered this character partially, however, under Louis XIV.

At Blois it was, that the witching Louise de la Baume le Blanc first captivated the heart of the king, and that the charms of her mind, even more than those of her fair face, made the greatest monarch of his time her slave. For two years they loved in secret; but the secrets of palaces are only such in name, and at the end of that period the king, finding the restraint thus imposed on him irksome, it ceased to be the interest of the court to ignore the intimacy.

In 1667 Louis, therefore, made the domain of Vaujour into a *duché-pairie* under the name of La Vallière; but the duchess, who had been so tenderly loved, and who had loved so devotedly in return, only retained the king's volatile affections two years after this open declaration of his passion.

La Vallière saw herself supplanted in 1669 by Madame de Montespan, and she felt the slight deeply. She had sacrificed all she most valued to her affection for the king, for she never deceived herself as to the false position she placed herself in, when she became his mistress, and never ceased to reproach herself for her weakness while she remained at court. Of the austerities she practised after she retired into conventual life, we can only say that those of the Magdalen, in whose character Le Brun painted her, could not have exceeded them in severity.

She would not even allow herself the indulgence of grieving for the loss of her only son—the Duc de Vermaudois: and when his death was announced to her, she only replied, that "her sins claimed so many of her tears, she had none left for her sorrows." "It is his birth," she added, "and not his death, that I ought to mourn." And yet the devoted affection she bestowed on her unworthy lover cannot be doubted. On first learning his

preference for the new favourite, she addressed to him these lines:—

"Tous ces défauts, Louis, font tort à vos vertus.
Vous m'aimiez autrefois, vous ne m'aimez plus;
Mes sentimens, hélas! différent bien des vôtres.
Amour! à qui je dois et mon mal et mon bien,
Que ne lui donnez-vous un cœur comme le mien,
Ou, que n'avez-vous fait le mien comme les autres?"

This was the last expiring sigh of a love that was thenceforth to be stifled, and the resolve once made, it was irrevocable.

The duchess, even in the height of the favour she enjoyed, was ever preoccupied by its instability, no less than by a consciousness of her error. When painted by Mignard, she desired to be placed between her two children, Mademoiselle de Blois and the Duc de Vermaudois, playing with soap-bubbles, and she caused to be inscribed beneath the picture, "*Sic transit gloria mundi.*" She died in 1710, aged sixty-six, in the most edifying frame of mind, under the name of *Sœur Louise de la Miséricorde.*

The last adieux of royalty to the Château de Blois may be said to have been celebrated in the sumptuous entertainment given there in 1668 by the "Grand Monarque," on his way from Chambord to Paris, unless we reckon among royal residents the ex-Empress Marie-Louise, who, with the infant King of the Romans, resorted thither in 1814, when the allied armies menaced Paris. At the present day, this magnificent and extensive edifice—which once lodged monarchs and pontiffs; where lived and meditated King Réné of Provence; the castle of Louis XII., of François I., of Henry III. and Catherine de Medicis; the prison of Marie de Medicis, and the place of exile of Gaston d'Orléans; the spot where Louis XIV. first met Louise de la Vallière, the palace whence Marie-Louise dated the last acts of her sovereignty, and the refuge of

Napoleon's fallen heir—is reduced to a barrack, and the beautiful historical chapel has become a tailor's workshop!

The mass of these irregular constructions, where mingle in picturesque and charming disorder all systems of architecture, crowns the old city with imposing effect; but of the original structure little remains besides the great tower dovetailed into the Renaissance additions of François I. In this, as in other châteaux, popular credulity has added fictitious horrors to the annals of those mysterious and sombre vaults, the silent depositories of so many terrible secrets.

The external façade rises to the height of three stories, abruptly issuing from the rock, and supported by buttresses; while within the great quadrangle is found the bastardised wing, added with Vandalic taste by Mansard, at the order of Gaston d'Orléans, shorn of its colonnade; on the left, the scanty remains of the exquisite additions of Louis XII., on the right the admired wing and staircase of François I. The outer staircase stands, a marvel of delicacy and taste, and on its vaulted roof appear the characteristic heraldic devices of Anne of Brittany, François I., and Claude de France, exquisitely carved. The spiral staircase leads to the apartments of Catherine de Medicis and Henri III., now restored to all their original richness. But alas! in many parts the bare stone alone remains, for the barbarous fury of the Revolution had no pity on its defenceless walls. The statue of Louis XII.—"*Père du Peuple*" though he was—was still the statue of a king, and, as such, found no favour in the eyes of a capricious and democratic populace:—

> . . . . "Jam follibus atque caminis
> Ardet adoratum populo caput."

Alas! who can reckon on the continuance of his popularity? Not a château in France that had ever sheltered a crowned

head escaped the demoniacal rage of the mob; and it is melancholy to see those once elaborate architectural details, so valuable for their antecedents, mutilated and disfigured, chipped and blackened by the wanton ruffianism of popular violence, and not by the unpremeditated and almost inevitable chances of war. Such as it stands, however, the Castle of Blois is still one of the finest monuments of the ancient monarchy.

With Blois ends our pilgrimage in that part of France, justly termed its "Garden." That there are other districts of that country equally prolific in interest, none will dispute as a general principle; though few, we believe, have personally realised the fact.

We are too apt to look upon France in the light of a near neighbour whom we can visit at any time, and therefore never really visit at all, though we may continually give him a friendly recognition as we pass his window. The majority of our countrymen look upon Paris as France, and Paris being now the high-road to almost every other land, we are too apt to content ourselves with "doing" that capital in the first instance, and then with taking an admiring glance on either side of us as we dash rapidly through south-east or south-westward, on our summer and autumn excursions, with little idea to what a woeful extent we are passing "*à côté de notre bonheur sans nous en douter.*" To ourselves who know France, as the French expressively have it, "*comme ma poche,*" this is an unpardonable suicidal error, and we should like to see a conscientious guide-book provided for every separate river of France, not one of which is without its attractions. For ourselves we have done our little best to fire others with the enthusiasm with which the archæological and historical relics of "*la belle France*"

never fail to inspire us, and we can only hope that should such of our readers as are not already acquainted with them, ever be tempted to visit in detail the localities through which we have endeavoured to conduct them, they may enjoy the tour, whether intellectually or physically, as thoroughly as ourselves, with whom

> . . . . "'Tis treasured up among
> The things most precious—and the day it came
> Is noted as a white day in our lives."

THE END.

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